



**The Ontological Framing of Expanded Abstract Painting within Henri Bergson's
Principles of Movement, Duration, Intuition and Becoming**

by

David Hawley

Master of Fine Art (Research), University of Tasmania, Hobart

Graduate Diploma in Art and Design, Philip Institute of Technology, Melbourne

Diploma of Teaching, University of Tasmania, Launceston

Bachelor of Arts in Visual Art, Tasmanian State Institute of Technology,
Launceston

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Abstract

The Ontological Framing of Expanded Abstract Painting within Henri Bergson's

Principles of Movement, Duration, Intuition and Becoming

In *Creative Evolution* (1911) Henri Bergson studied the mechanics of thought and illusion and articulated the concept of nothing in relation to problems of existence. He placed particular importance on creative activity as this is unquantifiable, complex and multi-layered but aspirational in the labouring and permutations of art and its making (Deleuze 1966, p. 38). In this project, Bergson's key principles of movement, duration, intuition and becoming are applied to abstract painting in order to frame a new ontological perspective.

The project draws from a specific lineage of abstract painting beginning with Kazimir Malevich's notion of New Realism which emphasises process and creation. This lineage has been applied to Bergson's notion of Creative Evolution in order to re-envisage abstract painting. Referred to as Expanded Abstract Painting, it provides a foundation for the practical research as an umbrella term and a vehicle for expression. Expanded Abstract Painting advocates an innate search for something where there may actually be only nothing. It has characteristics, such as those evident in digital media, print media and sculpture, not conventionally associated with the medium of painting.

Bergson's principle of movement as a shifting multiplicity of ideas and perceptions is applied to this conundrum. Movement is a key strategy within this

project as it mirrors the ontology of perception. In the course of this research it has been split into three categories: perceptual, actual and ideological. This division is reflected in the practical research as composite experience through the presentation of painted works made from or juxtaposed as multiple parts. With these layers of thinking in mind, the practical research demonstrates a multiplicity of consciousness and of experiences.

Duration is understood and perceived through processes of movement. Through the presentation of composite experience, the practical research expands the convention of abstract painting and reveals how duration is multiplicitous and divergent due to changing temporal conditions. Intuition is articulated and researched as method. Within the research intuition demonstrates a degree of pre-determined thought which in turn creates space for experimentation and openness. Other strategies such as not-thinking, not knowing and the deferral of consciousness inform the characteristics of intuition. Furthermore, the project demonstrates the application of intuitive strategy through mediated and un-mediated means. This is pursued through a performative studio-based approach and through the mediated use of image reproduction technologies such as scanners and photocopiers. Both approaches reveal how an Expanded Abstract Painting practice can create space for improvisation and lived experience.

The practical research is divided into four different series, in the chronological order they were made. The shift in approaches of these bodies of work within

the project is framed as becoming; a state of transition and change; an unfolding of experience subject to multiplicity. Becoming is also framed in the project as a conflation of Bergson's other philosophical principles: movement, duration and intuition.

Through the application of Bergson's principles this research establishes a new ontological reading of abstract painting as expanded. The ingredients of this expansion are significant for their specific characteristics have currency; that is, the mix of old and new technology is indicative of present circumstance. It positions abstract painting as an alternative to deterministic thinking in a period where imaging technology offers greater control than ever before. Life force or '*élan vital*' in the practical research is representative of a desire for freedom of expression.

As an evolved methodology this project demonstrates an important insight into a contemplation of phenomena and how we navigate ourselves in time. The significance of the ontology resides in the experiential analysis of Bergson's memory and matter dualism through studio engagement. There is always something other than what is simply there. The investigation of Bergson's paradoxes as visual art creates a sensation of doubt and anxiety but these are absorbed into process as motivations for transformation and change. These factors, as an ontological condition are part of a larger becoming. As was the

case with Kazimir Malevich's notion of New Realism, there is an ongoing and unfolding revolution of consciousness through movement.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 What is the Project?

This project is the ontological framing of expanded abstract painting within Henri Bergson's four key principles of movement, duration, intuition and becoming.

These underpin an important theme: the positioning of gestural abstract painting as philosophical enquiry. A questioning and rethinking of this paradigm has enabled the identification of commonalities between unlikely sources; namely art made using secondary devices such as photocopiers, computer software and inkjet printers and art made directly in real time using first hand painting techniques by the artist himself. A Bergsonian framework has unified these contrasting mediums under one methodology. This has expanded the definition of abstract painting and enabled an intuitive and multi-layered investigation.

The idea of nothing and its associated conundrums triggered the project. This opened a fascination with Andy Warhol's late work, particularly his *Shadows* (1978-9) because these, as visual art, embodied many of the perplexing and contradictory characteristics of nothing as a subject. In addition, Kazimir Malevich's essay *From Cubism and Futurism To Suprematism/The New Realism In Painting* (1915), laid the foundation for a specific ideology based on the process of painting. Key to this was a zero or nothing starting point. The abstract painting process, in this context, is essentially creationist: that is, it aspires to make something from nothing. This was applied to the practical research. In *Creative*

Evolution (1911) Henri Bergson articulated the idea of nothing in relation to his principle of movement. It opened a pathway for the application of his other principles which have shaped important approaches to process, guided experimentation and provided a philosophical framework. *Creative Evolution* (1911), above all other Bergson texts is the prominent source because in it he placed particular importance on creative activity as unquantifiable, complex and multi-layered and aspirational in the labouring and permutations of art and its making (Deleuze 1966, p. 38). In practice, these qualities bring about a divergence, a movement away from mechanistic thought and towards a tendency for creativity.

In terms of art history Bergson advocates a revival of formalist tendencies and an emphasis on the perception of matter. His concerns are with the immanence of life as it is apparent in the empirical or sensual world and ones encounters within it. 'As art historians work through their disillusionment with the anti-aesthetics of postmodernism and a related anxiety about a rearticulated formalism, Bergson awaits his untimely return (Emerling, 2013 p. 261).

In this exegesis, I have focused on Deleuze's interpretation of Bergson. However, it should be acknowledged as one interpretation amongst many. As de Mille and Mullarkey stated; *Bergson has... 'outgrown' the Deleuzian mould in which he has too often been set; there are too many Bergsons in the philosophy of Bergson to match one model, and each of them is as artful and creative as the next, each an*

exemplar of the thinking in duration his work strived to perform in its own writing
(2013, p. 11).

Deleuze's interpretation is particularly useful in establishing a framework for the practical research. He emphasises intuition and how this creates a method conducive to creativity through the perceiving of phenomena not in terms of opposites but as moving dualisms. The acceptance of in-kind difference in matter permits almost anything to be absorbed into the perceptual field of painting. Further to this is Deleuze's embracement of unpredictability through divergent lines of experience and how this becomes necessary for duration. He describes this as a 'turn' away from determinism and it is reflected in the practical research as a shift from mediated process to un-mediated process. The inclusion of contrasting techniques in the submission such as inkjet prints, screen-prints and real-time painting would normally appear non-sensical. Considered in the context of Deleuze's interpretation of Bergson, which emphasises becoming, it is possible to conceive these factors as productive and reflective of durational life experience or 'élan vital'.

Expanded painting is 'painting plus something else... a kind of painting that moves out beyond the easel and the physical limitations of the image to investigate how far painting can go in spatial and temporal dimensions' (Titmarsh 2017, p. 13). I add the word abstract to emphasise the lineage of this project beginning with Malevich's New Realism. Expanded abstract painting is an

umbrella term and its inclusion facilitates a repositioning of abstract painting within Bergson's key principles of movement, duration, intuition and becoming.

In this exegesis, Bergson's principles form the four body chapters. Each is cited in relation to contemporary art practice and influential developments in the practical research and I include current abstract painting sourced internationally, particularly from Europe and the United States, as these are well documented in established exhibition venues and acknowledged in written publications.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the principle of movement. Bergson's philosophy is a process view, and this is carried through by action and change in all experience, consciousness and perception (Foley 2013, p. 11). Movement is an underlying mechanism: in it there is no sameness or singular experience, instead everything is in a state of plurality and flux. Movement is a critical means for the activation and recognition of intuition, duration and becoming, and is key to understanding the idea of nothing and how it may be manifest in painting. For this reason it is discussed first in Chapter 2.

The chapter begins with the notion of multiplicity and how, in the context of the practical research, this is created by movement. The surface in Andy Warhol's *Skull* (1976) is discussed in order to identify different layers of recognition: for example, the image of a skull and an impasto textured surface. The presence of texture disrupts the image of a skull so that the viewer engages in a perceptual

movement between it as representation of something and the materiality of paint as something else. There are multiple orientations within the work.

Chapter 2 is then divided into three subcategories: perceptual movement; ideological movement and actual movement. This assists in its identification across different processes, methods and ideas. Perceptual movement refers to the process of experiencing a sensation whereby a still thing, such as a brushstroke or shape appears to move. This is evident in the submission in a variety of different ways: for example, as animation, seriality, surface fluctuation and reflectivity. I also identify another type of perceptual movement whereby objects usually considered external to the work may be absorbed into it. This is referred to as interior exterior movement.

Ideological movement is discussed in relation to Bergson's articulation of the idea of nothing. This is applied to many parts of this project, especially the process of image formulation as something from nothing. This is related to the photocopier accidents (see Figure 21) at the beginning of this project. The third category, actual movement, refers to instances of kinetic activity such as gesture and mark-making. This is evident in a variety of ways, some of these are pouring, sweeping, wiping and blurring. David Reed's *Painting Paintings* (2017) exhibition at Gagosian Gallery, New York is cited due to the presence of painted brushstrokes as a residue or after-image of actual movement.

During this chapter I also introduce characteristics pertinent to the method of the practical research. Essential are the processes used to make artworks and how these generate meaning. I use the terms mediated and un-mediated to differentiate the degree to which the artist employs additional image making devices, external to one's own body and the impact this has upon ontology. For the purposes of this research the term un-mediated refers to processes where the artist himself or herself, via direct bodily connection, is the primary source of image creation. In contrast, the term mediated refers to the practice whereby the artist out sources image making to an external inanimate device such as a photocopier, scanner, computer software, or ink jet printer. For example, Wade Guyton uses computer software and an ink-jet printer to generate imagery.

The artist's gesture is mediated through the digital file and the printing machine. Even though it is a machine rather than the artist's hand that make the marks, the paintings present a strong gestural quality. They are a digital response to the black brushstrokes of Franz Kline and the 'Black Paintings' of Stella (Deitch, 2012 p.6).

Guyton shows how new technology may be utilized unconventionally to manufacture unique gestures which reinvigorate and continue familiar painting paradigms such as American Abstract Expressionism.

Many printmaking techniques, which require the use of an intermediate such as a block or stencil are also mediated. It is an aim of this project to demonstrate

that these seemingly contrasting approaches produce different durations through composite experience.

Furthermore, the term trace is intended to be understood as a mark in or on a surface upon a substrate. A mark applied in paint leaves a trace of a body gesture.¹ These terms are complicated by the distinction between mediated and un-mediated processes. *Within the linear economy, gestural mark-making therefore is, or appears to be, a trace of a performative action and embodied state, which can be real or simulated, deliberate or unconscious* (Petherbridge, 2010 p. 103). The research will demonstrate that a photocopier for instance, possesses its own gesture which is in turn preserved as a signature trace on a substrate. These different qualities complicate the perception of matter and ontology. In Chapter 2, I refer to this as a composite of actual movements.

In Chapter 3, titled Duration, I apply this principle to both making and experiencing artworks. Duration is a 'lived experience of time' and it is subject to ones 'becoming' or constant movement between states of consciousness as a result of free will or a willingness to being, without determinism. 'Duration is essentially memory, consciousness and freedom. It is consciousness and freedom because it is primarily memory' (Deleuze 1966, p. 51). Lived experience, in real

¹ Gestural painting 'describes the application of paint with expansive gestures so that the sweep of the artist's arm is deliberately emphasized (Chilvers, 2004 p.282).'

time or as projected sensation through artworks is essential for duration. It is made actual through perception subject to temporal conditioning.

In Western society clock time or measured time dominates. This is a problem as 'we should learn not to manage time but to let time manage us. ...When we are flowing along with a process, awareness of time disappears' (Foley 2013, p. 26). When our awareness of clock time disappears, experience becomes subject to duration. The quality and specificity of experience and all its layers determines duration. It is discussed in relation to an artists' thought processes and the residual presence of the artist in the work, through different manifestations of gesture. Duration will reveal how complex and varied our experience of time can become in relation to the perceiving of painting. Movement is discussed as a mechanism for perceiving duration.

Bergson's principle of intuition is discussed in chapter 4. This is framed as a method, quite distinct from impulse or instinct. I outline three strategies for the application of intuition. These are non-thinking; not knowing; and the deferral of consciousness. Non-thinking removes pre-determination and creates a freedom to act. It is related to mechanised techniques such as tracing. Not knowing causes failure but this is re-positioned as affirmative and productive. The deferral of consciousness is a further strategy to bring about change and movement. The idea of abstract painting and collaboration are incorporated into this component.

I will expand Bergson's intuition in relation to other parts of his philosophy in more detail later in this chapter.

In Chapter 5, I discuss Becoming, which refers to a state of constant transition and change.

Becoming is infinitely varied. That which goes from yellow to green is not like that which goes from green to blue: they are different 'qualitative' movements. That which goes from flower to fruit is not like that which goes from larva to nymph and from nymph to perfect insect: these are different 'evolutionary' movements. The action of eating or of drinking is not like the action of fighting: they are different 'extensive' movements. ...An infinite multiplicity of becomings, so to speak, passes before our eyes... (Bergson 1911, p. 304).

Becoming is a constant state of transformation across and within things. It is different from evolution 'in the Darwinian sense of mutual or symbiotic development of species that share the same related environments, but in the sense of a symbiosis between the living and the non-living' (Grosz 2005, p. 10).²

In chapter 5 additional philosophical ideas to Bergson that have assisted in shaping this project are also discussed. Albert Camus absurdist interpretation of the *Myth of Sisyphus* questions conventional understandings of meaning.

Through a re-interpretation of this myth Camus demonstrates how meaning can

² Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, as an alternative to Darwinism is discussed later in this introduction.

be generated through potentially meaningless action, or nothing. It also examines failure and repetition as mechanisms for affirmation. I also apply this philosophy to the paradigm of gestural abstract painting in order to identify growth and change.

Bergson's principle of becoming frames an important development in this project; a transition from mediated to un-mediated processes. In chapter 5 this is discussed as 'the turn' and it initiates a reflection about process, especially the influence of deterministic thinking upon duration and intuition.

1.2 Framing the Project through *Creative Evolution*; Bergson's key principles and components.

The following discussion is a further interpretation of Bergson's key principles and new related components. Outlining these now is an important factor for establishing the relationship between the theoretical and practical components of this project. Bergson's principles create a structure to frame the practical research. The intention is to situate the research around key Bergsonian principles to reveal its findings. A framing of the research under Bergson's principles of Movement, Duration, Intuition and Becoming intensifies the positioning of painting as philosophical enquiry. It incorporates a further layer of meaning through the unpacking of an additional philosophical context.

Framing is essentially a method for the presentation of the research. Bergson is not the primary subject, rather it is the ontology of expanded abstract painting and its method. The exegesis is written to the studio practice and should not be interpreted exclusively as a detailed examination of Bergson's philosophy.

In *Bergson and the Art of Immanence* (2013) John Mullarkey and Charlotte De Mille present fourteen essays by different authors, each of whom examine parts of Bergson's philosophy in relation to art and art history. Underpinning all of these essays is the notion of immanence, that is, reality is within the substance of this world and not a transcendental realm. It is located in the senses and realized through perception as consistent with Bergson's ideas.

In the practical research there is an emphasis upon matter, as paint, scanned found object or equivalent and its inherent qualities through formalist approach. The acknowledgment of its presence as stuff is important. Different processes, both mediated and un-mediated apply the notion of immanence directly as they take place in the studio as a sensual engagement with materials. The application of the idea of nothing, as a starting point creates a space for this to happen through the removal of pre-determined imagery or representational association. Meaning is in the world through action and an engagement with process.

In *Duration and Evolution: Bergson contra Dennett and Bachelard* (2001) Keith Ansell Pearson also emphasises the presence of immanence in Bergson's philosophy. He argues that 'Duration is not the transcendental condition of the

new but the immanent condition of its real production' (p. 145). In this text Pearson expands Bergson's idea of evolution as different to Darwinism. He emphasizes duration as divergence and that it cannot be explained by science as it is unquantifiable. It does not proceed in a linear progression like clock time and 'involves the creation of the new in the sense of something that is unforeseeable and incalculable' (p. 156). Pearson expands Bergson's *Creative Evolution* through comparison to other philosophical positions.

Key to my interpretation and summarizing of Bergson's principles is Giles Deleuze's book *Bergsonism* (1966). Much of the information provided is adapted from this source.³ In it Deleuze established the importance of *Creative Evolution* (1911) ahead of other Bergson texts because of its emphasis on creativity as unpredictable and evident 'in the labouring of art and its making' (Deleuze 1966, p. 38).

Deleuze's articulation of intuition as method and his emphasis on movement and time as duration create a template for production. They add a philosophical framework to immanent formalist painting that locates meaning in process. To think and act intuitively requires a sideways movement and even a turn in different directions. In relation to one's perception of time this cannot proceed in straight quantifiable lines like clock time. For Bergson, it is these qualitative

³ Despite more recent interpretations Deleuze's is still a faithful rendering (Emerling, 2013 p. 262).

(rather than quantifiable) experiences that enable time to be perceived as duration. (Deleuze 1966, p.9)

In *Bergsonism*, Deleuze's emphasis on duration as 'a turn' provides a correlation with an important development in the practical research, the shift from mediated to un-mediated image generation processes. This embraces unpredictability as a cyclic condition and an unquantifiable multiplicity of lived happenings and experience. Repetition and failure in the production of painting are indicative of a life force or *élan vital*. The implications of this 'turn' are outlined and are positioned as ontology as this exegesis progresses. Through the immanence of real-time painting process framed within the principle of becoming this generates meaning.

As the discussion proceeds new terminology will be introduced. Many of the components of Bergson's philosophy are interrelated, so that it is difficult to utilize one without the other. The complexity of Bergson's principles, as umbrella terms to explain the practical research, is intended to gather momentum with the reading of the exegesis. For instance, Bergson's principle of intuition further expands duration and movement as do additional components such as dualism, difference, false problems and the composite. The principle of intuition is separated into parts and the discussion surrounding each part adds a new component.

Deleuze's interpretation opens an intellectual framework to produce the practical research. His un-packing of intuition as method facilitates not knowing, not thinking and deferral. In the following pages I will outline some key components of Deleuze's interpretation of Bergson to demonstrate how this thinking relates to the specific approach to painting applied in the practical research.

To consider intuition is to place a name to a method of thought. It is a process which, through movement, facilitates transformation and change. Deleuze identified three acts which determined the rules of intuition as method. These are the stating and creating of problems; the discovery of genuine differences in kind; and the apprehension of real time (1966, p. 14). All three acts are influential in understanding the application of intuition as method to the practical research.

The first act, the stating and creating of problems, is itself subject to two types of false problems. These are firstly, problems 'whose very terms contain a confusion of the "more" and the "less" and secondly questions which are "badly stated" and seek answers where there are none'. The 'more and the less' is a dualism; to seek answers within this is, futile and hence a false problem. One cannot exist without the other. A 'badly stated' question is an attempt to create order at the expense of disorder, instead of accepting the composite nature of these states as dualisms (Deleuze 1966, p. 17-18).

A dualism is evident in irreconcilable binaries such as order/disorder, external/internal and something/nothing. It is important to note that Bergson's idea of dualism is more complex than the presence of binary terminology. It is part of a detailed theory about difference. Bergson believed that to attempt to seek answers through the reconciliation of opposites is futile and even wrong and such an action only leads to the formation of false problems. One must simply accept these as composite experience (Deleuze 1966, p. 19).

Intuition, as distinct from intelligence, is a method for the repression of illusion for '...only intuition decides between the true and the false in the problems that are stated, even if this means driving the intelligence back on itself' (Deleuze 1966, p. 21). To seek a definition of nothing for instance, is a false problem. This project does not seek a singular solution but instead presents a moving and changing ontological circumstance.

The identification of differences in kind assists in the recognition of false problems and illusions. This is Bergson's second act for determining the method of intuition.

... all our false problems derive from the fact that we do not know how to go beyond experience toward the conditions of experience, toward the articulation of the real, and rediscover what differs in kind in the composites that are given to us on which we live (Deleuze 1966, p. 26).

Deleuze (1966, p. 31) cites a lump of sugar to illustrate differences in kind. As an object in space, a lump of sugar can be measured. This can be a point of difference by degree to other things, but to categorise in terms of scale does not take account of the complexity of its difference. Key to this is a recognition of duration in things for a lump of sugar may also be dissolved and the act of its dissolving changes its 'being in time'. Subject to circumstance, a lump of sugar is even different from itself. *This alteration, which is one with the essence or the substance of a thing, is what we grasp when we conceive of it in terms of Duration* (Deleuze 1966, p. 32). Hence the recognition of duration in the individual properties of things determines differences in kind.

The third act for the determination of intuition as method, the 'apprehension of real time' 'gives a fundamental meaning' of intuition and re-enforces Bergson's separation of space and time (Deleuze 1966, p. 31).

Duration is always the location and the environment of differences in kind; it is even their totality and multiplicity. There are no differences in kind except in duration – while space is nothing other than the location, the environment, the totality of differences in degree (Deleuze 1966, p. 32).

A recognition of duration is also a recognition of real time. There is always more, as in the transformation of the lump of sugar and phenomena are subject to change.

These three acts have formed part of the method for painting by opening an intellectual space to produce. To consider problems as dualisms (as opposed to opposites) creates a movement and makes a 'turn' from mediated to un-mediated processes possible. A recognition of in-kind difference permits things not usually considered as image to be absorbed into its expanded syntax. Finally, a formalist approach in a studio environment as immanent production has created marks, traces and gestures indicative of real time experience.

Further to Deleuze's framing of intuition, duration and movement, there is also a number of other components to Bergson's philosophy. These are *élan vital*, multiplicity and the composite.

In *Creative Evolution* (1911) '*élan vital*' is referred to as 'vital impetus.' In *Bergsonism* (1966) Deleuze identifies a difference between the words 'élan' and 'impetus' in that the former is open to a wider range of associations. 'Impetus' simply refers to movement whereas 'élan' may also mean 'momentum through surge to vigour.' Regardless, Deleuze prefers the term *élan vital* as it is more common among recent writers (1966, p. 9). It refers to a life force within all living things which contributes to unpredictability and difference. This enables free will (Bergson 1911, pp. 86-97).

Bergson identified both 'quantitative' and 'qualitative multiplicities' as modes of human categorisation or 'things which could be determined in terms of their dimensions or their independent variables' (Deleuze 1966, p. 38). Human

endeavour and experience, in the context of this project, is subject to 'qualitative multiplicities' as these things are inexpressible, complex and multi-layered; they cannot be measured. The principle of Duration, as a lived experience of time as distinct from measured or clock time, is a qualitative multiplicity.

Bergson perceived existence to be a composite of experiences and movements.⁴ These are not progressive or dialectical but are instead accumulative and contribute to duration. Dualities, such as something and nothing are also composites. He identifies and discusses further dualities, as composites of the idea of nothing: some of these are affirmation and negation; reality and non-reality; and external and internal (Bergson 1911, p. 298).

I will extend the idea of the composite further, in order to demonstrate the inter-relation of the different parts of Bergson's thinking and its varied and fluctuating components. It is evident in a further dualism, the identification of the actual (matter) and virtual (memory) as modes for the perception of phenomena. 'Bergson's method allows for a form of travel beyond the habitual, or all too human, configuration. It involves the dividing of composites – in this case matter (objectivity) and memory (subjectivity) – along lines that differ in kind' (O'Sullivan, 2013 p.166).

⁴ The Macquarie Dictionary defines composite as 'made up of various parts or elements; compound.' (1987, Second Revised Edition, p.384)

Bergson identified two planes of matter, the actual or that which is corporeal and related to the body and the virtual or that which is in the realm of the unperceived, the un-sensed and the infinite. These two planes are only representative of human capacity and there are many others which are inconceivable or 'non-human'. That which cannot be perceived is part of a 'dark background'. One can access some of these through the Intuition as Duration. (O'Sullivan, 2013 pp. 167-171).

In relation to the perception of time, the actual is associated with the past, because it evidences recorded fact and the virtual with the future because it exists in the realm of possibility. To flesh out the composite nature of Bergson's principles and their poetic qualities, it is also possible for the past to be perceived as virtual. The virtual and the actual are subject to dualistic movement. They are not fixed binary states.

The experience of Duration is integral to this shift because it permits a delay or curve in experience. It does not progress in a straight line but instead diverges into unexpected terrain due to intuitive method. 'A Bergsonian method will thus stimulate the past, especially the 'poietic' past, to behave as potency. This will produce duration, i.e. a delay or curve, in the application of classificatory schemes' (Efal, 2013 p.54).

Hence, the creation of delay, through Duration manufactures a virtual past.

For Deleuze, the virtual is used to differentiate between the actual, or the present and the past (memory) (Guerlac, 2006, p.189). Any functions directly linked to the body are in the present. However, these modes are not separate, but exert influence upon each other as composite experience. 'Our past, then, as a whole, is made manifest to us in its impulse; it is felt in the form of tendency, although a small part of it only is known in the form of idea' (Bergson, 1911 p. 5). We are constantly moving between both virtual and actual states as a process of living. This movement again constitutes duration.

The virtual is a critical component in Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (1911) because it enables a distinction from Darwinian evolution and natural selection.

'Darwinism remains on the level of actual or discrete multiplicities. It cannot think life in terms of the virtual.' Very briefly, for Bergson life unfolds in divergent lines quite different from the determined and predicted pathways of natural selection. Understanding time as Duration and its potential for interruption and discontinuity permits a creativity instead of predictability. Hence Duration is the condition of novelty (Pearson, 2000 p157).

For the purposes of establishing a framework within which to situate the practical research, this is a summary of Bergson's key philosophical principles and components. As the exegesis unfolds, so will their application and explanation; many terms will grow and diversify. They cannot be discussed only once. For example in Chapter 2 the composite is discussed as layers of

movement, then in Chapter 3 it is expanded further to assist in the identification of duration. The principle of movement is an underlying mechanism both in the practical research and in the structure of the exegesis. It is relevant to understanding all other principles.

Bergson's key principles provide a structure for the framing and hence explanation of the practical research. It is not a detailed un-packing of Bergson's principles through practice. This strategy allows for a re-positioning of Expanded Abstract Painting, as evident in the practical research, within a Bergsonian philosophy. The findings of this research, as an ontology of Expanded Abstract Painting, are revealed within this framing.

In the following sections I will introduce additional material which adds further explanation to the philosophical and contextual influences on this project. I discuss Bergson's articulation of the idea of nothing as dualistic movement,

Kazimir Malevich's notion of New Realism, Mark Titmarsh's definition of expanded painting, James Elkins' 'sub semiotic mode', Albert Camus philosophy of Absurdism in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Emma Cocker's repetition and affirmative failure and I also provide a contextualisation of nothing in artistic practice. These will be related in detail to the practical research in the body chapters of this exegesis. They are particularly relevant for the application of Bergson's principle of becoming because they contribute to a growth both in ideology and practical research.

1.3 The Idea of Nothing; Bergson's Process View

Bergson's articulation of nothing, described in *Creative Evolution* (1911) as a fluctuating cognitive process, has framed much of the thinking for this research. It is both ontological enquiry and part of a functioning method. In addition to the outlining of his key principles and components, an examination of the idea of nothing by Bergson assists in further interpretation. In Chapter 2 I discuss Bergson's process description of the idea of nothing as movement between something. This is understood as a dualism and any attempt at definition or rendering as image through art is a false problem because this endeavour is to search for answers where there are none.

Bergson states that the process of conceiving nothing is essentially negative, in that it always involves the removal of something. The absence of something is replaced by a void.

Our life is thus spent in filling Voids ...and if we mean by void the absence of utility and not of things, we may say, in this quite relative sense, that we are constantly going from the void to the full... (Bergson 1911, p. 298).

This action however, highlights a movement between components of the dualism of negation and affirmation; what is taken away is always replaced, in this case by the idea of a void. This constant moving between notions is Bergson's movement. The mind keeps jumping from one thing to another and is

never empty but full and 'as full and comprehensive as the idea of All' (Bergson 1911, p. 296). In this way he associates the idea of nothing with the idea of everything and these in turn are expressed also as dualities.

Thus is implanted in us the idea that reality fills a void, and that Nothing, conceived as an absence of everything, pre-exists before all things in right, if not in fact. It is this illusion that we have tried to remove by showing that the idea of Nothing, if we try to see in it that of an annihilation of all things, is self-destructive and reduced to a mere word; and that if, on the contrary, it is truly an idea, then we find in it as much matter as in the idea of All (Bergson 1911, p. 298).

This is a brief summary of the idea of nothing articulated as cognitive process. In this project nothing is also examined in relation to perception. As a different issue this question mirrors ontological circumstance. Ontology is defined by Sandywell (2011 p. 443) as 'the study of being or logic of existence... any conceptual mapping or theory concerning What-there-really-is.' This research demonstrates how expanded abstract painting, through philosophical enquiry can generate its own ontology.

1.4 Something from nothing: the new (old) realism

This project began with accident and chance. My photocopier malfunctioned and with only a black sheet of paper under the hood it produced surprisingly

patterned imagery. A photocopier is not designed to create its own imagery, hence it appeared from nowhere. This accident mirrored Kazimir Malevich's pioneering process ideology outlined in his essay *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism/The New Realism in Painting* (1915) (Andersen 1968, p. 19-41). In it he outlines a methodology for abstract painting which quite succinctly requires the creation of imagery from no external source material. In short, the production of something from nothing. This ideology added significance and meaning to the photocopier accident and it inspired a fascination with the idea of nothing and its ontological circumstance.

'But I transformed myself in the zero of form and emerged from nothing to creation, that is to Suprematism, to the New Realism in painting – to non-objective creation' (Andersen 1968, p. 37).

The zero point for Malevich was the inspiration with which to begin, to create something from nothing. Utilising this methodology to make a painting was considered more authentic compared with the 'naturalist' method, which was to reproduce an already existing subject from nature. 'The new realism in painting is very much realism in painting, for it contains no realism of mountains, sky, water...' (Andersen 1968, p. 38). More authentic because it didn't propose to be anything beyond itself; it is precisely what it is. A painting was hence disconnected from the world of things and could lay claim to a state of

independence, or autonomy. At this time there was a clear distinction, for Malevich, between copying and creating.

To begin from nothing (a blank canvas at least), without the mimicry of objects, pioneered a new type of realism; the realism of non-objective painting.

(Andersen 1968, p. 26). This ideology set in motion a century of dialogue and exchange which in general is about the medium of painting as a vehicle for the interrogation of realism as a composite of different experiences in real time. The practical research for this project operates within this paradigm.

1.5 Expanded Abstract Painting

In his book *Expanded Painting* (2017) Mark Titmarsh includes a diagram illustrating the notion of expanded painting. I have included a copy of this diagram (Figure 1) as it clearly demonstrates how painting may be expanded. As stated at the beginning of this chapter I have added the word abstract to establish a direct link with Malevich's ideology of *New Realism*.

This exegesis will demonstrate that in the practical research the idea of nothing is reoccurring and layered. *New Realism* is a foundation of expanded abstract painting's method. Its conundrum's open the way for thinking about ontology

through practice. This becomes evident in notions of repetition and looping, failure and impossibility (see Chapter 5).⁵

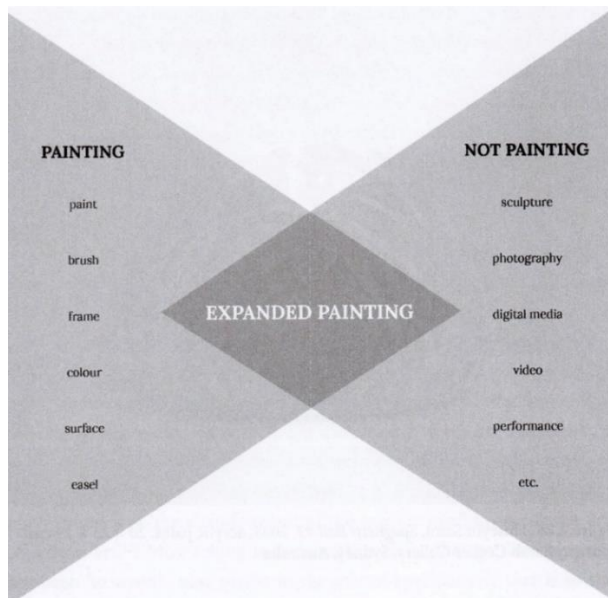


Figure 1. Mark Titmarsh, *Diagram of Family Resemblances of Expanded Painting* 2016

I do not aim to trace a historical trajectory of this paradigm but rather identify its method in the practical research. The emphasis is on developments in abstract painting after Warhol.⁶ One of his legacies was the acceptance of alternative ways of making and he questioned conventional notions of authorship through a fascination with mechanisation. Since this development artists have responded to advances in imaging technology in alternative ways, often counter to its

⁵ New Realism, as something from nothing, is a part of the method for the practice of Expanded Abstract Painting. It is not reductive and fixed but moving and expanded, as is Bergson's association of the contemplation of nothing with the idea of 'All' (see chapter 1.3).

⁶ See Deitch, J 2012, *The Painting Factory: Abstraction After Warhol*, exhibition catalogue, April 29 – August 20, 2012, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

primary intent. This counter-response has been intuitive and divergent and often involved a shift in expressive content. Mediated processes, comprising the outsourcing of image generation to a machine, change the ways in which the artist is physically present within the art object. That is, a conventional trace of the artists hand is no longer present.

A painting tradition that was once essentially reductive has now become expansive, bringing popular culture and current technology into its vocabulary. ...Once monolithic and doctrinaire, it is now more open and layered in its structure. Rather than reducing itself to a narrow definition of the medium, abstract painting has re-emerged as an arena where opposing concepts can invigorate each other (Deitch, 2012 p.5).

Characteristic also to this response is the influence of Duchamp's ready-made⁷ strategy and its questioning of the definition of art via the absorbing, or movement of phenomena not usually considered into its systems. These paved the way for a recognition of painting as philosophical enquiry. As Titmarsh stated; 'The ready-made figured a new conceptual craft for painting, since what is precisely non-retinal is thought, concept and idea. Thus the craft skills of studio production excited one wing of painting, conceptualism in the form of wit and philosophy, entered from another' (2017 p.29).

⁷ 'A name given by Marcel Duchamp to a type of work he invented consisting of a mass-produced article isolated from its functional context and displayed as a work of art' (Chilvers, 2004 p. 579)

The readymade paved the way for Warhol's questioning of authorship through its removal of craft or skill-based value systems. Painting could become expanded and hence something other.

In the practical research the inclusion of foreign objects such as palettes and photocopies, as painting, is a nuance of readymade strategy. These are not readymade in a purist sense as they have been altered by the addition of paint or a different transformation such as screen-printing. Chilvers (2004 p. 579) identifies 'the exercise of taste' as a difference between the readymade and a found object or *objet trouvé*. Series four of the practical research is titled *Found Object Scans* (2017- 2018) (see Chapter 3.2) to acknowledge this method.

The artistic scope of this project is potentially vast. Malevich's new realism begins an enquiry into nothing as ontology. The historical jump to Warhol is not intended to neglect other investigations, instead it acknowledges his fascination with machines and a deferral of consciousness away from the artist author directly. Duchamp's readymade strategy adds a further element to its method, a perceptual and ideological movement of the definition of art. This facilitates expansion. In summary, the inclusion of new realism (something from nothing), the readymade (as an expanding of painting's boundaries) and mechanisation (mediated/un-mediated process) as components of a methodology allow for an ontological investigation of the studio research as expanded abstract painting.

1.6 Absurdism

In this project meaning is generated through process. It is not predetermined but instead arises as a product of action. The making of the practical research has occurred within ideological perimeters of Malevich's New Realism and Bergson's principle of intuition for instance. There is no symbolism, metaphorical association or other conventional signage. The practical research functions in what James Elkins refers to as a 'sub semiotic' mode, which is quite separate from semiotics. As Elkins states,

In the end, semiotics shrinks the notion of what a picture is, assimilating pictures to texts and overlooking their painted strangeness. Semiotics makes pictures too easy; I want pictures to be harder to look at and harder to describe, so we cannot get as quickly from the slurry of marks to orderly historical meanings (Elkins 1995, p. 824).

In this context, if there is no intended semiotic content, the position of this project in relation to the transference of meaning is problematic. To assign meaning is to predetermine and calculate. These processes are not intuitive method. This does not refute the presence of meaning but rather questions its means of generation.

In *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* (1955) Albert Camus outlines the key characteristics of his philosophy of Absurdism. Its fundamental position

questions the validity of meaning in a post-Nietzschean continuum, for without a God, how can this be found? If there is no meaning, what is the point to life?

The Absurdist position does not attempt to answer these questions. Rather, it enables one to navigate the ambiguous terrain of existence through a recognition or awareness via consciousness or 'lucidity'. It is human nature to strive for certainty and reason, even where there may be none. For humanity there is but one thing for certain, and this is death, hence making all of life's strivings absurd. To accept the absurd position is also to embrace irrationality.

This project acknowledges the absurdity inherent within the assigning of meaning. This forms part of its ontology and is manifest as becoming.

Is it possible, then, to find meaning in life within the Absurdist position? To answer this question, Camus cites the *Myth of Sisyphus* as a metaphor for existence. Sisyphus, according to ancient Greek legend, was assigned to roll a large rock up a hill only to watch it fall back down again - this action continuing in an endless, inescapable cycle for all eternity. This predicament was punishment for disobedience and its intent was to assign futility as Sisyphus would toil to accomplish nothing for all of time, a genuinely absurd condition (Camus 1955, pp. 119 – 120).

For Camus, the moment of pause allowed to Sisyphus as he watches the rock roll back down the hill provides a space for consciousness and hence lucidity in the

cycle. Through these small moments, he has a space for thinking: this is a release from his predicament. Sisyphus is able to elevate himself outside the loop.

Lucidity is the agency of freedom.

Sisyphus ...knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn (Camus 1955, p. 121).

1.7 Repetition

Emma Cocker in her article *Over and Over, Again and Again* (2011) cites numerous examples of (mostly performative conceptual) art practices in relation to *The Myth of Sisyphus* to re-position it away from purely Absurdist interpretations towards something more affirmative. She outlines how Sisyphean looping or repetition may be perceived as regenerative, productive and also a mode of resistance (Cocker, 2011, p.268).

Iddo Landau in his article *The Paradox of the End* (1995) examines why we often feel disappointed upon completing a task and how the anticipated happiness of achieving a goal is not as substantial as the wanting or striving towards it. Landau offers a hypothetical, or alternative to the *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Suppose Sisyphus actually achieves his goal and upon pushing the boulder to the top of the mountain it no longer rolls back down? He proposes that Sisyphus' initial

jubilant would be temporary and subsequently replaced by a loss of purpose and hollow feeling. Released from his cycle, faced with no apparent aim, Sisyphus would have no option but to roll the rock back down the mountain himself in order to restore the activity and hence the sense of striving for a goal (Landau, 1995, p.558).

1.8 A Contextualisation of Nothing in Artistic Practice

There has been a vast amount of artistic practice investigating the idea of nothing and how this may be rendered or expressed in an artwork. Early in this project I became intrigued by an exhibition found online titled *not this, not that* (2015) at a mobile art gallery called Axle Contemporary in Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA. Although I was unable to visit this exhibition it was accompanied by a publication. Its text was as follows.

For millennia, humans have struggled with the linguistic conundrum of describing what is inherently indescribable, in naming the unnameable. As soon as words are used, meaning is lost. The same conundrum exists in science and art. This exhibition is a method of enquiry into this philosophical, scientific, religious, and artistic topic.

Inspired by artists and writers such as Yves Klein, John Cage, Agnes Martin, Gertrude Stein, and T.S Eliot, we draw on thinkers from Maimonides to Lao Tzu,

Werner Heisenberg, Jean-Paul Sartre, and more (Axle Contemporary, back cover, 2015).

Intrigued by this I purchased a copy. Upon arrival I was disappointed to discover that, apart from the back-page text, its pages were entirely blank. Being absent of material it was of course an attempt at rendering nothing. This experience itself highlights a conundrum in the subject, as stated in the *not this, not that* catalogue text and as Bergson emphasised: one can conceive of the idea of nothing but as soon as one attempts to expand it further in image or language it transforms into something. Its elusiveness may explain why artists have been so interested in it.

Two other recent exhibitions have explored artists' fascination with the subject of nothing. These are *Nothing* in 2001 at the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art in London and *Nichts Nothing* in 2006 at the Schira Kunsthalle in Frankfurt. Both published substantial catalogues and the essays and documented artworks within these are informative. This material assists in identifying how nothing, in a generalised overview, is manifest in twentieth century art.

In *Nothing* (2001), Graham Gussin (Carpenter and Gussin 2001, p. 12) cites Andy Warhol's use of repetition to create sameness as a strategy for the conveyance of emptiness. In turn emptiness is an expression of the idea of nothing. This is evident in *The Last Supper (Christ 112 Times)* (1986).



Figure 2. Andy Warhol, *The Last Supper (Christ 112 Times)*, 1986, screen-print, detail.

In this work, if viewed as a whole and not in detail, the image of Christ dissipates into pattern. It loses its uniqueness and creates an empty void (Gussin and Carpenter 2001, p. 12).

In another essay in the *Nothing* catalogue Francis McKee cites Andy Warhol's *Shadows* (1978-9) as indicative of the problematic nature of rendering nothing. He discusses the paradoxical nature of this subject (Gussin and Carpenter 2001, p. 12). These are discussed later in Chapter 5.

Charles Gere, in his essay *Nothing, Apocalypse and Utopia*, details numerous other examples of how different art forms have explored this issue. Some of these include the *Essay on Nothing* by John Cage and Rauschenberg's all white and black paintings. Gere elaborates John Cage's use of a 'soundproof anechoic chamber' in an attempt to experience nothing only to conclude it an impossible

task as he became 'overwhelmed by the sounds of his own body' (Gussin and Carpenter 2001, p. 60).

In *Nichts Nothing* (2006), Martine Weinhart wrote an extensive catalogue essay on the subject of nothing in art, entitled 'Seeing Nothing', which identifies a point in history where the exploration of this theme by artists moved away from a visual and material expression towards language-based or purely conceptual art forms. Weinhart cites Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square*, 1915, and *White Square*, 1917-18, as key points in art history that mark a beginning of a preoccupation with nothing (2006, p.12).

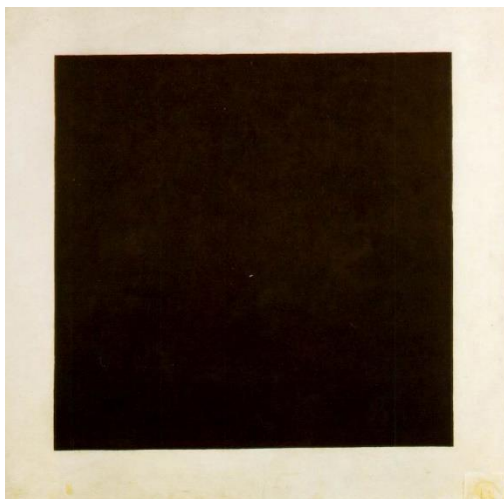


Figure 3. Kazimir Malevich, *Black Square*, 1915

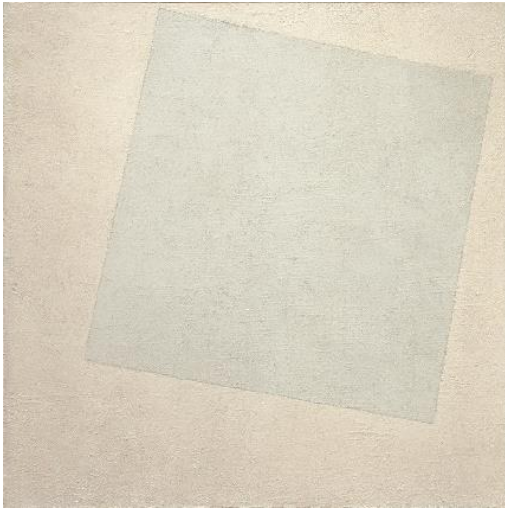


Figure 4. Kazimir Malevich, *White Square on White*, 1917-18

In retrospect, it is not easy to decide when nothing made its way into art. It almost seems as if it has always been there. In essence, it is the very objective of art, for there is scarcely anything more essential to the long history of the visual arts than the desire to make the invisible visible (Weinhart, M and Hollein, M 2006, p. 12).

Modern Art had a preoccupation with this conundrum beginning with Kazimir Malevich's reductive strategies. *White Square on White*, 1917-18, demonstrates the extremity of this direction. Visual references to external phenomena are removed leaving a 'non-objective presence' or an absence. Reduction through the agency of elimination actually communicates the opposite of emptiness. The removal of representational phenomena liberates the imagination, and the vacant space becomes a receptacle for infinite possibility, albeit projected. This mechanism initiates an important shift in the interpretation and experience of

art: a shift away from the artist as primary generator of meaning, to the viewer instead.

Black Square 'stands for the total absence of colour, for darkness, while the white concentrates light within which every colour existing in the world is contained' (Zhadova 1978, p. 45). Reduction is not destruction; the last painting is in effect the beginning, an instigator of new pictorial systems. The black square is a visual expression of zero (if one disassociates the presence of a square); a state of freedom through infinite possibility. It is not the last painting but the first.

Weinhart pursues the theme of nothing amongst a variety of different conceptual approaches to art making. For example in *1000 Hours of Staring* (1992-97) Tom Friedman stared at a blank sheet of paper for 1000 hours and then exhibited it. He invited viewers to stare at it too. Thus the entirety of the work is delegated to the viewer for 'nothing only exists where they see nothing' (Weinhart and Hollein 2006, p. 26-28). All Weinhart's examples included are enlightening and informative, but extraneous to the boundaries of this project, because most are prescriptive and performative; the part of the work which is the production of art becomes a predictable illustration of the idea. The work enacts out a pre-scribed narrative and is made in support of a concept. There is little scope for procedural improvisation or an engagement with aesthetics as a means for communication.

However, in the final paragraphs of her essay, Weinhart acknowledges the persistence of the visual in the work of Luc Tuymans, particularly in his exhibition *Nothing*, 2002-3 at the Galerie Zeno X in Antwerp. Like Warhol, Tuymans seems to pick images at random from everyday life as subject matter. He also renders his subjects in a particular way to imply something entirely other. Weinhart considers Tuymans to be a painter of a void as she states 'The technique produces only a void'. His works are not about appearances but are instead reflections on time and silence. He uses the medium of painting to explore themes beyond the visual. The inclusion of Tuymans at the end of the essay is an admission by Weinhart that the positions taken by 'Art and Language' and anti-visual art forms are limited.

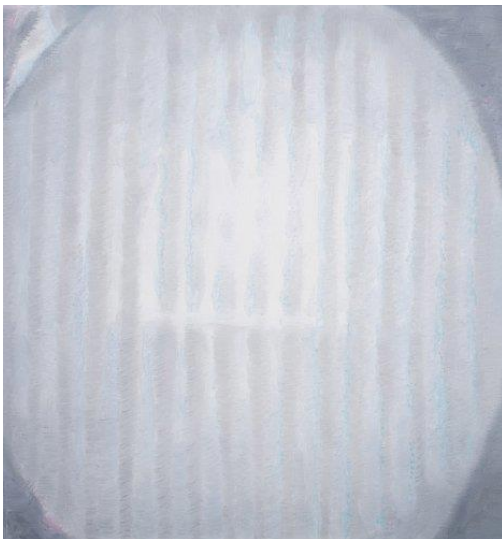


Figure 5. Luc Tuymans, *Lamp*, 2009, 56 x 53 cm, oil on canvas

In a preceding essay titled 'White Noise', Ulrike Gehrig adds to this discussion.

...since what is absent in painting can only be experienced through the presence of aesthetic expression, nothingness too, as the most radical form of artistic refusal, can only be brought forward using the agencies of painting. In particular it is the white pictures of modern art that ask about the ontological status of art by confronting us with the simultaneity of emptiness and abundance, as well as of absolute nothingness and pure potentiality (Weinhart and Hollein 2006, p. 54).

This statement is made within the context of an analysis of Malevich's white and black squares. Gehrig does not assign exclusivity of this theme to painting, rather she confirms it as an important mechanism for its exploration and articulation.

Whilst both these catalogues (and exhibitions) primarily emphasise performative conceptual art practice, their content highlights an opportunity for this project to demonstrate the continuation (as distinct from repetition) of the exploration of nothing in visual art forms. This task is made difficult by the lack of clear explanation, or an embracing of ambiguity amongst practitioners. As Reinhardt stated in 1960 'The mystery of the black paintings does not wish to be elucidated but rather acknowledged as a mystery' (Weinhart and Hollein 2006, p. 14).

The *Grey* (1972-) paintings of Gerhard Richter are discussed in Chapter 5. These are further manifestations of the idea of nothing in visual art practice, as he likens grey to an in-between zone, a state of absence close to nothing due to a 'neither/nor' predicament (Storr 2002 p. 315). This project is concerned with the

visual manifestation of nothing as a mirror for existence (ontology), and its potential to convey impossibility.

In the remaining sections of this introduction I outline the practical research and introduce influential artists and exhibitions I have visited. Finally, I identify Umberto Eco's notion of the 'open work' as an important boundary of this project.

1.9 Summary of the Practical Research, Influential Exhibitions and Artists

There are four distinct series of works in the practical research. Firstly, *The Same As It Never Was* (2015), in which source imagery was generated by mediating with a photocopier and computer software and then transformed into finished artworks using animation, screen-printing, mono-printing, inkjet printing and poured rubber. This body of work was exhibited at the Moonah Arts Centre (9 October – 7 November 2015). It was accompanied by a professional publication including an essay by David Thomas, artist and Professor of Fine Art (Painting) in the School of Art at RMIT University, Melbourne. Secondly, *Untitled No Idea* (2016 - 2017), characterised by a turn to un-mediated processes incorporating real-time painting techniques. This series was exhibited at the Henry Jones Art Hotel (28 March – 30 April 2017). Thirdly, the *Composite Works* (2017 - 2018), which extended un-mediated real time painting process across multiple panels in the one work session; and, fourthly, the *Found Object Scans* (2017-2018) which involved a return to mediated processes but a different image generation

method. Discarded objects thrown onto the studio floor were salvaged, photocopied, scanned into photo shop, subject to limited digital manipulation, then printed.

The public exhibition of two of these series of works, *The Same As It Never Was* (2015) and *Untitled No Idea* (2017) highlighted a shift in process during the practical research; namely, a turn from mediated processes to un-mediated processes. The former involved artworks made from images generated by the use of secondary devices such as a photocopier and computer software; and the latter the direct touch of the artist through real time painting processes.

Feedback and reflection during these exhibitions enabled the processing and unification of potentially opposing elements. Despite differences in process and appearance, the methodology remained the same. All four of Bergson's key principles persisted, as did the procedural enquiry into something from nothing.

Most of the artists sourced for this project are living now and there is a specific currency to their work, particularly in how they respond to technology and being in real time. Each has a different method and gestural character. All offer aesthetic interpretations of Bergson's principles and other philosophical content.

Andy Warhol, particularly within his late work, discovered ways to render nothing through the repetition of something and also opened up unlikely similarities between machines and humans through process. Wade Guyton builds on this legacy to further reveal how the bodily presence of the artist can

actually be transferred through images made by surrogate devices such as inkjet printers and computer software. Machines can reveal a new and alternative type of duration through mediated gesture. Christopher Wool incorporates failure through screen-printing and photocopying to open up new intuitive possibilities. David Reed and Gerhard Richter apply specific techniques to create a sensation of immediacy and interrogate time as duration. Jacqueline Humphries and Katharina Grosse explore ways that painting may be expanded to incorporate phenomena usually considered external; they move its boundaries. Albert Oehlen reflects upon past conventions and makes intuitive methodological changes to further push the definition of painting. He sacrifices good taste in order to shift one's consciousness and bring about change. Josh Smith finds new ways to confront difficult problems of painting by making more painting. His factory-like approach proves that quantity can manufacture quality. In summary, all these artists make work to convey certain philosophical ideas, particularly the presence of a life force or *élan vital* in the most unlikely of sources.

During this project I visited three influential exhibitions: *Andy Warhol/Ai WeiWei* at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (11.12.15 – 24.4.16); *David Thomas: Impermanences (Changing)* at the Plimsoll Gallery in Hobart (26.8.17 – 17.9.17) and *Gerhard Richter The Life of Images* at the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane (14.10.17 – 4.2.18). At the *Andy Warhol/Ai WeiWei* exhibition I was intrigued by underpainting and how this contained a degree of mechanisation as gesture. This inspired the turn away

from mediated processes. David Thomas' exhibition revealed ways to connect very different artistic mediums, such as painting and photography, to create composite experience. Finally, Gerhard Richter's exhibition at QAGOMA added contextual detail through the discovery of Karl Otto Gotz, whilst also providing an opportunity to see painted photographs and a *Grey* painting.

1.10 The Open Work

In his book *The Open Work* (1989) Umberto Eco proposes a non-narrative image mechanism within which to generate meaning through real-time experiencing. Painting is a method of organising 'crude matter ...while at the same time defining it as a field of possibilities' (p.101). The open work is not a receptacle for limitless interpretation but rather is subject to specific frameworks created by its author. This is conveyed via aesthetic signs which are quite different from conventional signs. Eco states that 'aesthetics are a vehicle for communication but not like a conventional referent ...not like a ...hieroglyph of vitality that can be serially reproduced and which maintains a consistent message' (Eco 1989, p. 103). His notion of *The Open Work* sets a boundary for the interpretation of painting in this project via aesthetic experience. His position is consistent with James Elkins' notion of a 'sub semiotic' mark (see page 33).

New technology has enabled greater precision and control over image generation, manipulation and consumption. In many cases this has encouraged determinism and pre-conceived thinking at the expense of intuition. It

manufactures an experience that is removed from real time and the physical presence of a maker. Bergson's principles of movement, duration and intuition provide a means to restore lived experience and the capacity for painting to convey what is perceived to be really there.

The submission juxtaposes different work from the four series of practical research, in order to establish ideological connections between contrasting visual sources. Through a multiplicity of processes and aesthetic states, the definition of gestural abstract painting is expanded and framed primarily through a Deleuzian interpretation of Bergson's key principles of movement, duration, intuition and becoming. Abstract painting is also positioned as a mechanism for ontological enquiry. It examines conundrums of perception by positioning the idea of nothing as a subject. These mirror human existence and an innate desire to locate meaning.

1.11 Research Questions

How do Bergson's notions of movement, duration, intuition and becoming frame an ontology for abstract painting?

Can intuition, as a method, establish durational connections between painterly gestural artworks with different aesthetic manifestations?

How can the idea of nothing be expressed in Expanded Abstract Painting as movement?

Conclusion

In this introduction I have outlined important aspects of this project, including Bergson's key principles of movement, duration, intuition and becoming, the turn from mediated to un-mediated processes, expanded abstract painting, influential artists and ideology, including Warhol's *Shadows* and Malevich's *New Realism* as methodology. In addition, I have identified four different series of practical research. In the submission, the juxtaposition of mediated and un-mediated works, and also different manifestations of movement as composite experience, express Bergson's principle of duration as a multiplicity.

In the exegesis I explain how Bergson's principles frame an ontology for expanded abstract painting. These are supported by examples from the practical research and artistic practice. To further clarify and contextualise Bergson's principles I have outlined additional terminology. These are all inter-relational; that is one needs to understand the parts to appreciate the whole.

In the exegesis conclusion I relate Bergson's principles of movement, duration, intuition and becoming to the idea of nothing. This clarifies the discussion of these principles in relation to Expanded Abstract Painting as ontology. In the practical research a sensation of anxiety as a result of ambiguous spatial movement is reinforced. The turn from mediated to un-mediated processes is discussed as Sisyphean resistance and the juxtaposition of artworks made with these different processes is indicative of multiplicity and expressive of a

Bergsonian in-determination. Malevich's key Suprematist works, *Black Square* (1915) and *White Square on White* (1917-18) are also discussed as conduits for the addition of content rather than its absence. That is the rendering of a state close to nothing does not achieve a zero point but rather the opposite. Furthermore, in the exegesis conclusion Bergson's notion of dualism will be applied to the idea of nothing and expanded abstract painting.

In Chapter 2, I discuss Bergson's principle of movement. This is related to key examples and developments in the practical research and also in wider artistic practice. David Reed uses interference pigments to create surface movement, Jacqueline Humphries incorporates an internal frame to initiate interior/exterior movement, Katharina Grosse pushes the perceptual boundary even further to make connections between the work and architecture and Andy Warhol explores movement between something and nothing in his *Shadows* (1978-9). Movement is divided into three different types: perceptual; ideological; and actual movement. This assists in its clarification as multiplicity and as ontology. Movement is also discussed in relation to process and is framed as an essential mechanism for the actualisation of Bergson's other principles.

Chapter Two: Movement

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss Bergson's principle of movement. It is an important part of his process theory because it creates a mechanism for change and the creation of difference. Movement refers to various states and conditions that are in constant flux (Foley 2013, p. 11). I have decided to discuss it first because, as a process, it permits the other key principles - duration, intuition and becoming to function and exist. Movement is an underlying theme of exploration. It is identified in various manifestations in the practical research and these are further supported by additional examples from wider artistic practice.

Movement is divided into three different types: perceptual; ideological; and actual. This division enables an identification of some of the layers and complex applications of this principle. The division of movement into these three categories also adds ontological substance because the discussion is primarily concerned with the perception of what is or is not there in actuality.

The identification of these three types of movement permits the explanation of important components in the practical research. It is not an objective to use the practical research to explain the complexities of Bergson's movement. However I wish to emphasize Bergson's notions of the virtual and the actual as a mirror for the types of movement identified in this chapter. 'This virtual realm might then

be understood as a realm of infinite potentiality, whereas the place of matter in the actual is very much the terrain of our finitude, tied as it is to the specific interest of the organism' (O'Sullivan, 2013 p. 172). For Bergson, the idea of the virtual is critical for creativity because it is unpredictable and immeasurable. The three types of movement discussed in this project speak directly to the practical research.

Perceptual movement refers to the illusion of motion in a still object. This is present in many different manifestations such as stop motion animation, the presentation of works in series format, surface fluctuation and reflection, and the direction of gestures as marks in a painted surface. Furthermore, expanding the definition of painting to include foreign objects, such as palettes, requires a different type of perceptual movement. This can relate the inside image of a painting to phenomena outside its boundary.

Ideological movement identifies the cognitive process associated with the articulation of the idea of nothing as a to-ing and fro-ing with something. This is significant for the genesis of this project. It is discussed as a method for the creation of images and for the beginning of abstract painting. The photocopier accidents which form the inspiration for the images in the first series of practical research titled *The Same As It Never Was* (2015) are pivotal because they embody this process.

Actual movement is related to gestures made by the artist and frozen in marks which leave a trace. The variety of techniques used in the practical research are categorised as a composite which in turn conveys the multiplicity of movement. Actual movement is an important conveyor of lived experience and is also implicit in the presence of different types or degrees of duration. As gesture, actual movement is also discussed as a feature within the creation of a specific type of perceptual movement in the mediated paintings.

Movement creates collections of experience subject to difference: these are composite experiences. The sum of these parts, through further movement, also contributes to one's becoming. The project submission will present a composite of different expanded painting processes, ranging from screen-printing, real time painting and inkjet prints. This juxtaposition of difference is unified by a single methodology; to create imagery (something) from nothing. Each creates a different type of movement.

2.1 A Multiplicity of Movement

To categorise movement into three parts is to unpack its presence in painting throughout this project. I identify it as layers of difference within the same thing; that is, how specific qualities in painting initiate the identification of perceptual, ideological and actual movement. It is then practicable to oscillate or move back and forth between these as states of recognition. These layers of different movement create a multiplicity of consciousness.

In Andy Warhol's *Skull* (1976) (see Figure 6.), a stylised rendering of a human skull is screen-printed over a painted impasto ground. The interaction between these two layers is a movement, as the undulated surface of the ground creates ruptures within the screen-printed image. The viewer's attention oscillates between the figure of the skull and the materiality of the paint in the ground. It is screen-painting, not screen-printing. The interrelation of these two elements adds a tension to an otherwise mundane rendering of the subject. The deadness of the skull as image is animated by the actuality of surface movement. This is amplified when viewed in close proximity (see Figure 7.).



Figure 6. Andy Warhol, *Skull*, 1976, synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on linen, 182.9 x 203.2 cm

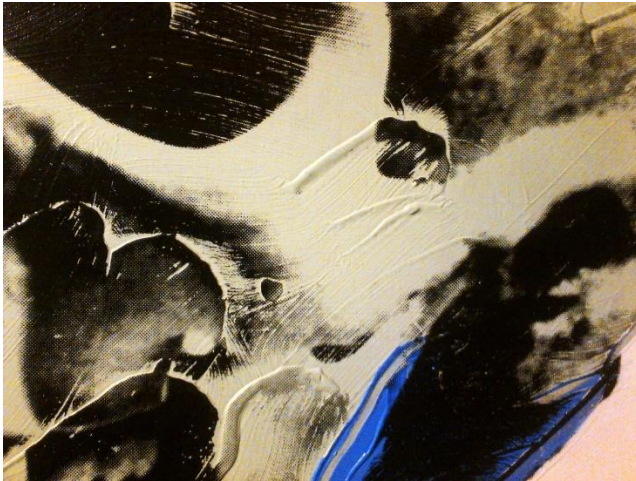


Figure 7. Andy Warhol, *Skull*, 1976, detail

This is a movement between the perception of the illusion of a skull and the actual materiality of paint as paint. Actual movement, in this case is not kinetic movement. Rather it is present as a residual gesture in the form of a painted mark. A physical trace of the hand (or equivalent) remains.⁸

Its translation to the practical research is of a different degree, as there is no 'skull' or illustrative mimicry of natural phenomena within abstract painting. In this instance mimicry is replaced by geometry as composition (this is discussed in Chapter 5 as landscape orientation, pp. 165-166). Like Warhol's skull/surface movement, there is an oscillation between geometry and impasto surface. The marks within the surface and their frozen gestures veil a particular type of pictorial structure which implies a spatial movement as depth and flatness. This

⁸ In the case of Warhol it is unclear exactly as to whose hand created the impasto ground; Warhol's or his assistants.

composite of factors and their subsequent movement creates a multiplicity of fluctuating experience.



Figure 8. *Untitled (No Idea) No.7*, 2017, detail

In abstract painting the absence of illustrative subject matter through mimicry does not remove the illusion of something. Instead the recognition of a different type of something is required. It places other demands upon the viewer. As a process, this is the recognition of both perceptual and actual movement plus the ideological movement as something from nothing.

2.2 Perceptual Movement

In the *Dictionary of Visual Discourse* (2011, p. 452), Barry Sandywell outlines a generic definition of perception as ‘the cast, process or faculty that ensures that the world out there gets in here; how the mind comes to know external things through sensory ideas or, in its phenomenological variant, how the mind

constitutes the world of intentionality as the spatio-temporally extended world of real objects'. Sandywell explains that 'perception' engages more than just the five senses of sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch. In this discussion perceptual movement refers to visual experience.

For Bergson, the mechanism of perception presents a source for ongoing philosophical enquiry. Its product is always virtual or illusory but this doesn't mean it cannot be actualised. For example, in the case of a numerical multiplicity, where phenomena may be measured, there is actuality. By contrast in a non-numerical multiplicity, as is the case with artistic practice, there is an alternative procedural circumstance. Intuition, through a recognition of differences in-kind facilitates a different type of actualisation. It '...plunges into another dimension, which is no longer spatial and is purely temporal: It moves from the virtual to its actualization, it actualizes itself by creating lines of differentiation that correspond to its differences in-kind' (Deleuze 1988, p. 43). In Bergson's framework for this chapter, perceptual movement is illusion but may also exist as actuality through dualistic movement between cognitive states.

Perceptual movement refers to the illusion of movement as observed in artworks through visual sensory input. For example a painted brushstroke will imply movement tracing the gesture of the arm or wrist following the direction it was made. The actual brushstroke remains still but the viewer's eye moves across or along it. Hence the illusion of movement is seen and perceived and actualised

through the eye and body movement of a viewer. To expand upon Bergson's position, in this instance one's cognitive functions may also move between a recognition of the painted brushstroke as an object, existing in actuality, being still, and the illusion of its movement or dynamism. Hence a painted image exists both in the virtual and the actual.

Movement is activated by physical elements during real time and space, and these are influenced or determined by one's body. The position of the spectator in the gallery space in relation to the artwork triggers a specific aesthetic quality which in turn creates an illusion of kinetic movement; for example this may take the form of an optical buzz like static or visual noise. As part of the first series of work, *The Same As It Never Was*, I created *Noise* (2015).⁹ The image was produced as a result of a photocopier drum blade malfunction. What began as a photocopy, was scanned and manipulated in Adobe Photoshop. Its opacity was reduced 50% to achieve transparency and another layer of the same image was copied and pasted over the top, slightly off register. This action created an optical blur as the eye moves back and forth between the edges of both layers. In this work perceptual movement is achieved through two misaligned layers of the same image. The characteristics of the image are not changed.

⁹ The presence of layers on a surface to initiate perceptual movement in the practical research is consistent across mediated and un-mediated processes. They all work in different ways and therefore must each be different. They are not like looking at a screen as there is a surface. The surface of paint, as frozen gesture is juxtaposed alongside inkjet printed dots per inch. The inherent qualities of each achieves a different illusory sensation and hence a different duration.

Included are two reproductions of *Noise* (2015), one complete, the other a detail (see Figures 9 and 10.). This simulates the physical movement of the viewer's body to and from the work in the gallery space to both activate and deactivate the blur. In the detail, one can separate the two layers of the image, as it is magnified. However, in the full reproduction the distinction between the two layers is too far away. The overlapping edge of each layer creates a blur due to its distance from one's eyes.



Figure 9. *Noise*, 2015, ink jet print on paper, 128 x 91 cm

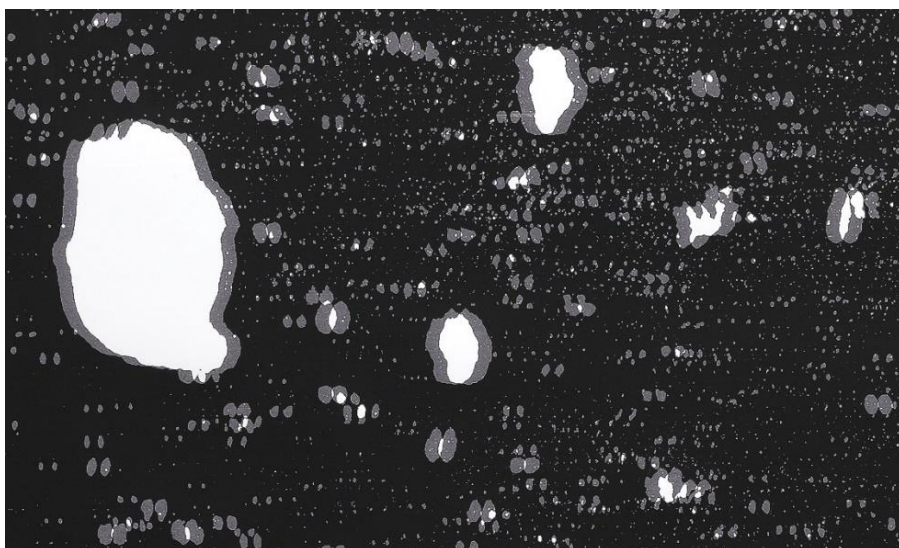


Figure 10. *Noise*, 2015, detail

In other work, particularly those utilising paint on canvas, there is a further extension of the means to create perceptual movement. For example, silver paint fluctuates between a flat grey and reflective metallic surface, depending on one's position in relation to the work and a light source. (See Figure 11).¹⁰

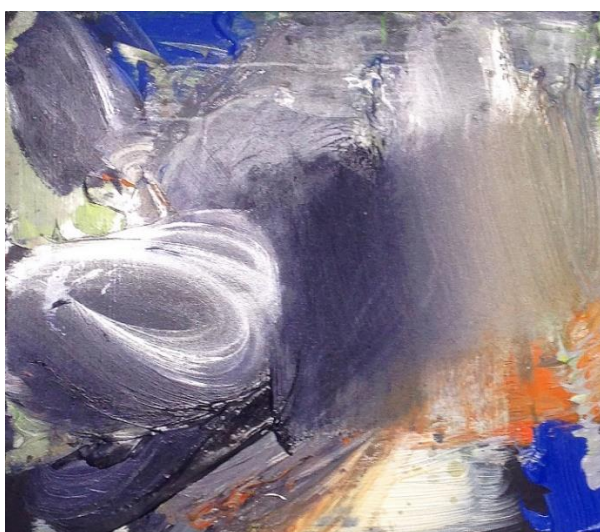


Figure 11. *Untitled*, 2017, mixed media on canvas

¹⁰ This is also the case with iridescent dry pigment.

David Reed adds interference pigments to produce optical movement (See Figure 12). This is achieved through surface contrast. Colours shift depending on where the viewer is standing and 'The viewer is dislocated between shimmering surfaces and layers of glaze'. Reed himself has likened the surface of particular works to a pool of water, moving and reflecting (Hentschel 2015, p. 26). This is complicated further as Reed sometimes inverts an image by flipping a stencil, incorporating both front and back, enabling a different type of reflection. Hence the title *The Mirror and the Pool* for his 2015 series exhibited at the Kunstmuseen Krefeld, Museum Haus Lange, Germany.

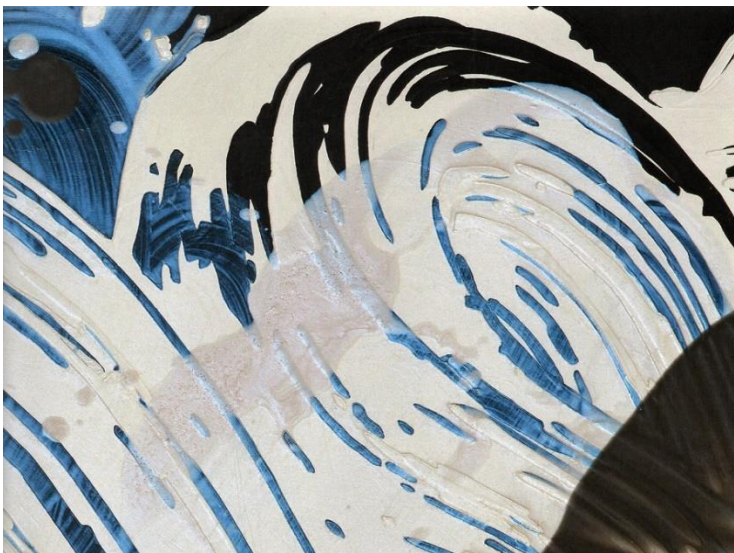


Figure 12. David Reed *The Mirror and the Pool*, 2015, installation detail

2.21 Interior Exterior Movement

There is also a different type of perceptual movement; between illusion and physical space or between the interior of the work as picture and its exterior as

an object in actuality. This is present in the materiality of paint (or equivalent) as different from paint as gesture and then the illusion of kinetic movement through the direction of a particular mark. David Joselit, in an essay about the work of Jacqueline Humphries refers to this as the interior and exterior, or more succinctly, what is perceived to be in and out of the painting. For the purposes of this discussion, I refer to this movement as interior exterior movement.

‘As opposed to Pollock’s abstract expressionist all over, in the painting of Humphries generation, there is a bilateral migration from edge to centre and centre to edge, which... often exceeds the physical boundary of individual works (Cook, Hudson & Joselit 2014, p. 20).

In *Untitled*, 2011, by Jacqueline Humphries (see Figure 13) an oscillating field of painterly gestures is framed by a precise black line. This is positioned at the periphery of the canvas, approximately the same width as the stretcher. The literal side of the canvas is reflected onto its front and hence connects with a perceptual zone external to the image. An inside and outside is suggested but importantly there is gestural movement between the two as the line is penetrated.¹¹

¹¹ See also Frank Stella’s ‘Black Paintings’ 1958-60. The edge and shape of the canvas support is reflected in the presence of a silver or white stripe applied to the canvas on a black ground, within the picture plane.



Figure 13. Jacqueline Humphries, *Untitled*, 2011, oil on linen, 228.6 x 243.8 cm

For Jacqueline Humphries, the addition of metallic paint creates a fractured surface and adds reflectivity, which is also non-absorbent and closed. The reflectivity of silver paint also pushes the viewer out of the painting, towards an exterior (Cook, Hudson & Joselit 2014, p. 63). Surface contrast itself creates a different interior/exterior movement.

Exterior and interior movement is also evident in the installation paintings of Katharina Grosse. The insides of her paintings spread out into real-space, sometimes in and out of gallery environments. Her spray paint fields float like clouds of colour. Rather than being transfixed to a support the paint appears applied directly to the air. In *Untitled*, 1998 above, the green spray-painted mass has an internal depth created by darker shades of colour towards the centre. Since this is applied directly onto the wall there is an engagement with

architecture. One's senses are split between the illusory depth inside the work as interior space and the literalness of the wall and architecture as external support



Figure 14. Katharina Grosse, *Untitled*, 1998, acrylic on wall, 450 x 1250 x 400 cm

A similar sensation of perceptual movement as transference between an interior and exterior is achieved in her works on paper. Large-scale sheets are hung like drapery, ceiling to floor, and onto these painted colours are applied in uniform vertical brushstrokes. The materiality of the paper is not denied as these are unframed and allowed to curl at the edges. Individual sheets become components of larger composite works. Through comparative scale these also echo the interior architecture of the gallery space. For example in *Seven Hours, Eight Voices, Three Trees*, 2015 (Figure 15.), vertical shapes in the work mirror the size and visual weight of the doorway while also being high enough to threaten the rectangular skylight. There is a movement between the image as painted coloured brushstrokes on paper, the size and shape of the paper itself

and the architecture external to these. One moves between the sensory illusion of colour, gestural direction, fragile support and architectural space.



Figure 15. Katharina Grosse *Seven Hours, Eight Voices, Three Trees* 2015, works on paper

Interior exterior movement is complicated and more than simply what is literally in and out of the painting. It is also a spatial flickering between depth perception through overlapping and the materiality of surface, between the interiority of depth and the exteriority of the literalness of paint on support.

In the practical research, particularly in the *Untitled No Idea* (2016-2017) series and the *Composite Works* (2017-2018), a movement between the exterior and interior is investigated through different methods:

1. the inclusion of palettes (see Figures 16 and 17);

2. the incorporation of a margin that contains incidental paint gestures (see Figure 18);
3. the use of canvas panels (see Figure 19);
4. multiple panels of different sizes (see Figure 19); and
- 5; the incorporation of found objects as subject matter (see Figures 29 and 30).

In the final method, the inclusion of phenomena usually considered external to painting as source material expands the boundaries of what painting could become. It also reflects intuitive decision-making and composite experience. Each variant is briefly expanded as follows.

Marks in the palettes are a release from the Sisyphean condition within the internal frame because they are not bound by the same context; they are independent of pictorial association. They offer a way out, a point of transference from picture making towards another reality, which initiates a sensation of freedom. Independent of pictorial association, they also offer a more direct connection to the physical presence of the artist. There is a nonchalance in the marks; they are a side effect of pragmatic action, the loading of paint on brush. Hence there is an absence of structured thought and a greater association with the idea of a pictorial nothing. To be read as painting they require a perceptual transformation and this needs a movement of something usually considered external to a picture, namely a palette, into its interior as

additional visual syntax. Incorporated into the internal picture plane they create alternative gestural zones.



Figure 16. *Palette*, 2016, acrylic on plastic platter, 36.5 cm x 48 cm



Figure 17. *Untitled (No Idea)* 2016, acrylic on canvas, 165 x 145 cm (with palettes)

The presence of a margin, in the works on mylar (see Figure 18) containing painterly gestures usually extraneous to the image, adds actuality, or another level of realism because a record of the artist, through footprints, the resting of brooms after paint application, and other procedural residue is a stockpile of lived experience. Importantly, a perceptual movement between what may conventionally be understood as painting and not-painting is altered. To perceive a footprint or a blob of paint made by a broom as part of the internal syntax of an image, the same as a brushstroke or drip, places additional demands upon the viewer. In this way it becomes possible to absorb phenomena, not usually considered painting, into its aesthetic field.

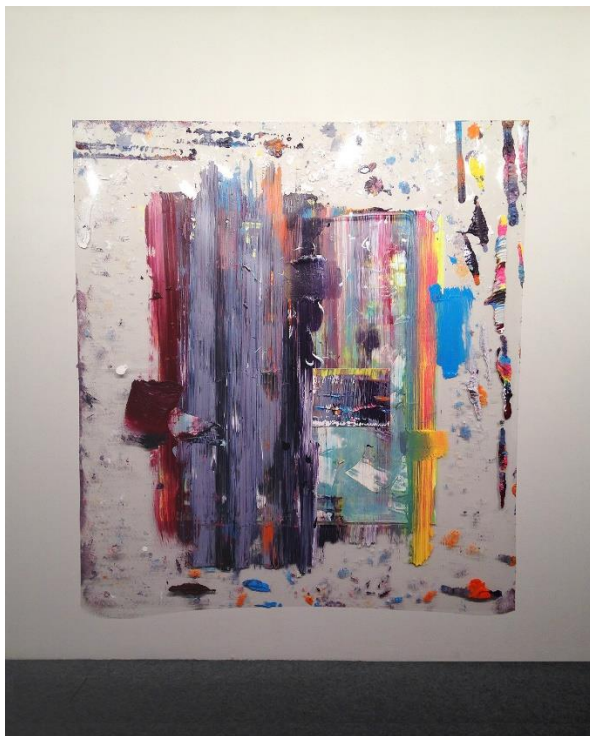


Figure 18. *Untitled*, 2017, mixed media on mylar, 270 x 220 cm

The positioning of multiple panels together also alters the interior of each painting. It creates a total image which is also made up of components. Each component is made at the same time, during the same work session. There is a perceptual movement between each separate component and these may be placed together to form one work. If this is the case what was once exterior in separated panels becomes the interior of the one work.

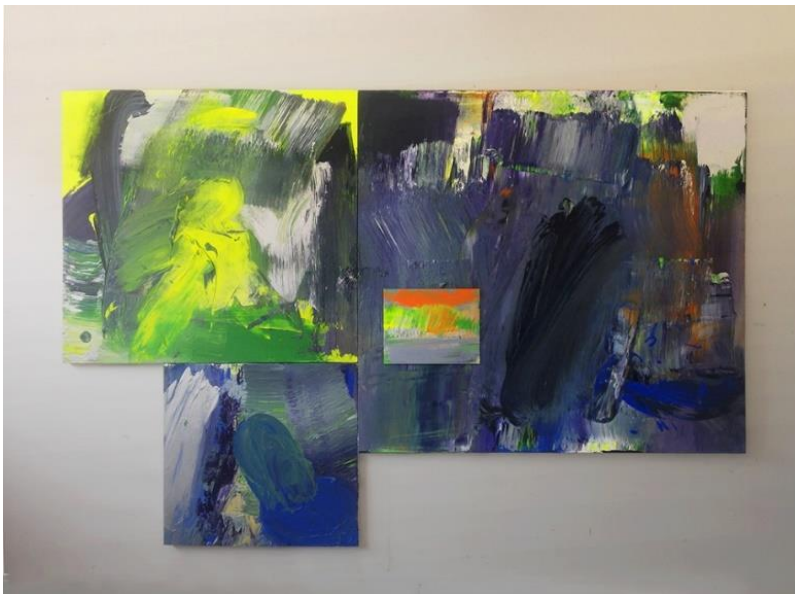


Figure 19. *Composite Painting* (in progress), 2018, mixed media on canvas, 190 x 240 cm

In the fourth and final series of practical research, the *Found Object Scans* (2017-2018) intuitive method is applied through different techniques, both digital and analogue. Studio detritus, being external to the image as rubbish is transferred into image. Discarded objects from the studio floor, pieces of craft wood used as armatures for resin casting, are collected and photocopied. These are then

scanned, manipulated via very simple software interactions and made into inkjet prints. This action extends the initial incorporation of palettes into a wider realm, making it possible to perceive almost anything as intuitive subject for painting. Concurrently, when these are hung as composites alongside paintings the aim is to make aesthetic connections between different media.



Figure 20. Installation view of a composite of mediated and un-mediated works presented for annual review, 2017, dimensions and mediums variable.

2.3 Ideological Movement

Bergson's articulation of the idea of nothing is an example of ideological movement (see page 30). It is a description of a process of thinking and a striving to define the indefinable. In this case nothing is achieved as a result of absence. Bergson states that the process of conceiving nothing is essentially negative, in that it always involves the removal of something. The absence of something is replaced by a void.¹² This movement between empty and full parallels our

¹² Paradoxically, even at the beginning of this process to consider a void is to replace nothing with something. A void has image.

striving throughout life to acquire a feeling of fullness via the ownership of possessions, the undertaking and completion of tasks and the general doing of things to 'fulfil' a purpose. Bergson associates the sensation of reality with the full and non-reality with the empty (Bergson 1911, p. 324). In this context, the act of painting, beginning with a blank substrate, is a movement of nothing to something, a creating of a reality due to the filling in of space. This project began with the premise of ideological movement; to create something from nothing and its associated conundrums. In *The Same As It Never Was* (2015), the first series of works, I made images resulting from the mechanical failure of a photocopier. These photocopier accidents early in the practical research provided a mechanism for the dissemination of content; that is, this process and its philosophical associations created meaning. I will briefly re-iterate these accidents and how they initiated a thinking about ideological movement as method.

The Same As It Never Was (2015) as a body of work developed in response to images realised by drawing or collaborating with a photocopier, a device whose characteristics I had utilised in various ways for some time. Particular to this work was the circumstance of how the images came about, as a consequence of mechanical failure. With only a black sheet of paper under the hood, two unexpected accidents - the first being developer exhaustion, and the second a drum blade malfunction - produced strange and unexpected patterns, a

subversion of the photocopier's standard function to copy or reproduce a provided document or picture. It was never built to create its own imagery.

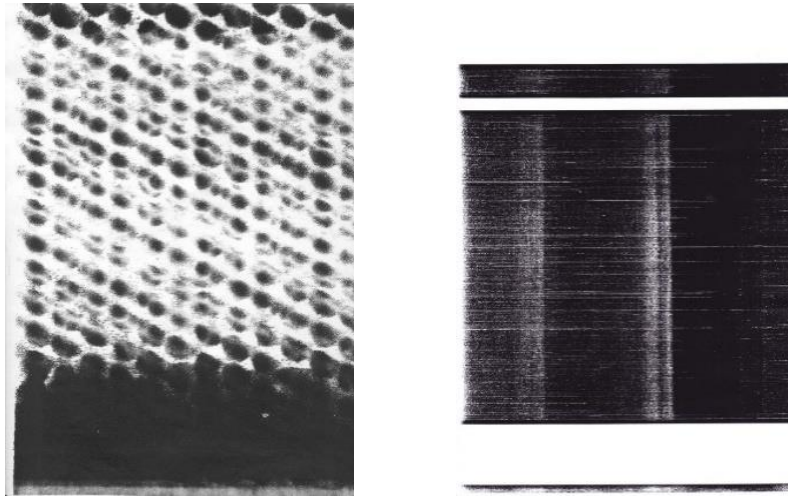


Figure 21. *Developer Malfunction* and *Drum Blade Malfunction* 2015, black and white photocopy on plain paper, 29.7 x 42 cm each

These two images provided the source material for an entire exhibition. They appeared unexpectedly, by chance and seemingly from nothing. In the case of the first series of practical research *The Same As It Never Was* 2015, this position is reliant on a black sheet of paper being nothing as this was the material photocopied. Even if there is no paper under the hood, there is the image of its underside. In hindsight, what is closer to nothing, a black or white sheet of paper? I selected black simply because it contained black and would therefore deliver an image. White also delivered a different type of image. This was less visually interesting and not pursued. I became interested in this occurrence because it mirrored Malevich's pioneering approach to abstraction as outlined in his concept of New Realism; that is, the process of making a painting is integral

to the generation of meaning. A subject is generated from the act of painting itself and not by the mimicry of naturalistic phenomena. As Malevich stated 'All the naturalists' pictures have the same form as in nature. The intuitive form should emerge from nothing. In the same way that Reason, which creates things for everyday life, takes them from nothing and perfects them' (Malevich 1968, p.31). Iterations of this circumstance are explored in all parts of the practical research across mediated and un-mediated processes.

2.4 Movement in Actuality

The term actual is useful in describing instances of kinetic movement during the making of the practical research. It is not to be confused with any attempt to define reality but inevitably will express a reality through composite experience.¹³ The process by which works are made, including different types of gesture and their association to movement provide important ingredients for the formation of content.

For the purpose of this discussion, actuality refers to a thing or object which appears to be there because it has physical properties. It is perceived through multiple senses; for example, it can be seen and touched. Any mark made in pigment on substrate exists in actuality. In this project there is an expressivity as human and mechanical gesture in the form of mark-making. This is expressed

¹³ See Chapter 3 Duration.

through aesthetic elements, particularly form and texture. The stylistic characteristics of each mark-making device whether photocopier, broom or even silk-screen stencil influence the outcome. For instance a photocopier has a unique aesthetic. This is maintained in completed work; for example in *Pouring* (2015) liquid rubber was poured over clear plastic lying on top of a full-scale photocopy image. The act of pouring traced around this image to replicate the photocopier gesture. The rubber shapes were later peeled from the plastic. In the completed work these are placed upon a white support. This is an up-scaled re-creation of an A4 sheet of plain paper.



Figure 22. *Pouring*, 2015, detail

Maintaining a stylistic connection to the photocopier mark reinforces Bergson's intuitive method as it requires a recognition of differences in kind (see Chapter 4 p.176). This is why it was rendered as screen-printing in other works to preserve the specific photocopy aesthetic.

2.41 Movement as Gesture

A mark is a record of a particular body gesture, made at a certain point in time, subject to unique conditions; it has a physical presence. The artist was there and a trace of their actuality remains within the surface. How these marks are made during the making is important.¹⁴ Different approaches to mark-making were investigated in order to construct composite experiences and demonstrate the multiplicity of Bergson's principles as expanded abstract painting. These move between mediated techniques, which utilise a secondary imaging device and un-mediated techniques which utilize the hand and hence direct touch of the artist. David Reed works across both techniques and shows how these shape movement differently.

In 1975, David Reed held a solo exhibition at Susan Caldwell Gallery in New York¹⁵. This body of work is the subject of a new exhibition and publication titled *Painting Paintings* (2017). Unlike most of the work made throughout his career, the 1975 works in *Painting Paintings* are all un-mediated in application. They are a series of brushstrokes on canvas, mostly painted in a left-to-right horizontal format, evoking a dynamic movement like reading text across a page. Black or

¹⁴ The implications of gesture will be discussed further in Chapter 3: Duration.

¹⁵ *Painting Paintings* (David Reed) by Katy Siegel and Christopher Wool (2017) was both an exhibition and a publication however there remains no clear title for Reed's 1975 exhibition at Susan Caldwell Gallery. In the text *Painting Paintings* there is a reproduction of the exhibition invitation which has no title. It simply states 'David Reed' (see p. 134). I refer to Reed's 1975 exhibition as the 'Painted Paintings.'

red paint is applied with a large flat brush onto a white ground by Reed himself, wet on wet allowing for drip like surface slippages.



Figure 23. Installation view 2017: *Painting Paintings* (David Reed)

The bulk of the work Reed has made since has incorporated screen-printing, plastic stencils, and less direct methods of application. Generally, his work is characterised by a more pronounced mechanisation of gesture. Its process is very considered and mannered, and hence is very different to the *Painted Paintings* of 1975.

Reed's brushstrokes created a peculiar type of animated movement, as a result of considered and controlled gesture. They freeze his actual arm movement in paint while also creating a powerful dynamism, as perceived by the spectator. The gesture and its connection to body movement adds a performative element.

2.42 Performativity as Movement

In the mediated paintings certain gestures are performed and marks are made, in actuality, during the making and this influences the flow and application of paint. These marks are determined by actual body movements such as brushing, sweeping, wiping, scraping and flinging. Fillers are added to paint to achieve an impasto consistency (like ice cream), stable enough so that it may maintain the form left by each gesture. These are undertaken with the canvas primarily in a horizontal position. This prevents surface drips and drooping and lessens the impact of gravity. If the paintings were moved upright, into a vertical position, after the paint is applied, it could slip off the surface.



Figure 24. Studio view September 2017

The speed of a gesture is reflected as texture in the paint surface. Exactly how this is determined remains open, but it is mostly reactionary towards previous

actions. There is a composite of different gestures. Paintings are completed in one sitting, usually of two to three hours. A variety of marks and surfaces adds visual weight, which is different for each work.

Brooms are substitutes for brushes. They influence paint differently: an outdoor broom with stiff bristles will scratch the surface, creating claw-like gouges; an indoor broom with soft and dense bristles will push paint off the surface. Regardless, the gesture of each sweep remains.

The sweep of the broom, the blur of a squeegee, the wipe or smear of a rag all create different marks and gestures. Alongside different brush marks and other incidental blobs and ruptures an oscillating visual field is created. The gestures possess a trace of actual movement and this in turn creates perceptual movement as still things appear to move.

2.5 A Composite of Actual Movements

The actual or kinetic movement of a particular device or mark-making implement creates a unique trace. The type of physical movement - that is, its force and its speed record a bodily gesture.¹⁶ In the practical research a variety of different machines and devices has been employed to make paintings. Each has its own stylistic signature.

¹⁶ This is less pronounced in the case of a broom sweep compared with a brushstroke.

The incorporation of machines, such as a photocopier and further image manipulation with computer software has required the mediation of process: that is, the resulting marks and gestures are not directly made by the hand of the artist. These are, in turn, juxtaposed alongside paintings made directly by the artist.

Actual body movements create gestures which are frozen on the surface of a support through the trace of the mark. The characteristics of the movements - that is, who or what made them and their particular qualities as influenced by circumstance - have consequences. For example, in the case of Katharina Grosse and her application of paint, Ulrich Loocke states;

Whereas in conventional painting it is said that the painter guides the brush, here it is more the case that Katharina Grosse is attached to the device that sprays the paint under pressure and therefore conforms to its conditions. ...A slight movement with the spray gun leads to crucial changes in the form (Grosse, Loocke and Reich 2013, pp. 92-93).

Grosse's body and hand movements work in collaboration with her spray device. There is a degree of mediation; that is, at times she is driven by the device and there is a relinquishment of control.

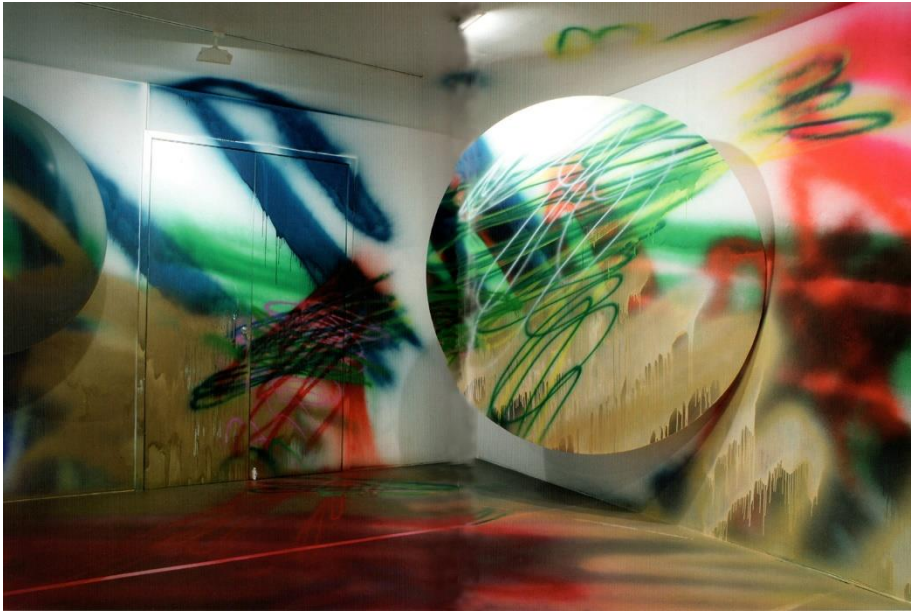


Figure 25. Katharina Grosse, *This is not my cat*, 2006, acrylic on wall, floor, canvas, latex balloons, polyurethane and Styrofoam, 364 cm x 1120 cm x 1220 cm

Screen-printed images in *The Same As It Never Was* (2015) possessed a heavy thick surface quality compared with conventional screen-printing. This was achieved by printing through a 63T mesh size, which permitted increased volumes of ink to be applied in one squeegee pull. The sharpness of the image was compromised in favour of material presence. There are occasional ink drips on the side of the frame and in some instances the actual movement of the squeegee remains visible in the surface marks. The pull of the squeegee even mirrors the movement of the photocopier scanner mechanism during the initial creation of the images.

A composite of actual movements is more apparent in Series 2 and 3, due to the use of unconventional paint application devices that are capable of achieving a

more pronounced mark.¹⁷ For example, in *Untitled No Idea No.7* (2017) (see Figure 26) the following mark-making devices were used: a squeegee; various brooms; rags; brushes and scrubbing brushes. It is visually overloaded with a collection of different marks and gestures made by these devices. These all push outwards against the boundaries of the stretcher while pulling the viewer towards the centre. There is an underlying compositional structure. Each mark suggests direction through gesture. A small brown triangle points against a yellow rhomboid attracting attention to the centre and suggesting depth through reduced proportion. Actual movement remains as a frozen gesture in the materiality of paint.



Figure 26. *Untitled* (No Idea No.7), 2017, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm

¹⁷ Actual movement, through mark-making is less evident in the works made using mediated processes. This was lessened so as not to distract from perceptual movement and to highlight the signature mark of the photocopier.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have related Bergson's principle of movement to key developments in the studio research and to other examples of artistic practice. These are shown to be different relative to their identification across varied examples. For instance perceptual movement has numerous incarnations across all four series of practical research. It is activated by the body movements of the viewer in the gallery space and their proximity to the work, and by surface texture, metallic and iridescent pigments and the trace of the artist's own movement left as frozen gesture. Furthermore through perceptual movement it is possible to incorporate foreign objects into the interior image of painting. The articulation of nothing as movement between something is re-positioned as a method for painting inspired by Malevich's New Realism. There is also a movement between a brushstroke as a material object and the implied motion caused by the direction of each mark in the surface as a trace.

The example of David Reed begins to introduce an important change in the practical research: the turn from mediated to un-mediated processes. Reed's exhibition *Painted Paintings* (1975) and its revival in the recent Gagosian Gallery publication and exhibition *Painting Paintings* (2017) is indicative of a reflection upon process and its meanings. There is a literalness to this work in its recording of the artist's body gestures as marks in paint.

This discussion has enabled the introduction of additional Bergsonian components such as multiplicity and the composite. Different approaches to technique are juxtaposed to create a composite of perceptual, ideological and actual inputs, the sum of which is perceived as a non-numerical multiplicity. This is unquantifiable experience. The categorisation of movement into three types articulates the presence of movement as layers of difference.

Bergson's movement is a vital procedural and ideological ingredient. It suggests the presence of an ontology and considered as the subject for an enquiry into perception, is by definition a composite. The notion of movement is not binary or singular; instead it is a Bergsonian dualism. Such is the case with the internal and external: one cannot conceive of one without the other (Deleuze 1988, p. 324).

The product of movement is yet to be elaborated, for this is a further principle of Bergson; a lived experience of time as Duration. This will be discussed in Chapter 3. In addition, movement also inspires change to the definition of painting itself. Through the incorporation of things considered external to it, painting may become something other. This is discussed in Chapter 5 as Becoming.

Chapter Three: Duration

Introduction

In this chapter I will frame components of expanded abstract painting within Bergson's principle of duration. In contrast to measured or clock time this is a lived experience of time. It is a qualitative or non-numerical multiplicity, a type of contextual awareness of being in the world subject to difference. To act intuitively assists in the recognition of difference. Duration is perceived in things and through the conscious articulation of experience as movement. It cannot be measured, is unpredictable, indeterminate and divergent. Therefore it cannot operate within the realm of science (Pearson, 2013 p.150).

Bergson's principle of movement, in all its types outlined in Chapter 1, is an important mechanism for the recognition of duration. Therefore this principle will continue to be applied. In addition duration will be discussed as composite experience and I will emphasise the frequency with which this term appears in Bergson's writing to support other important ideas like movement, intuition, becoming and multiplicity. As this exegesis progresses selected Bergson principles and components will continue to evolve and grow through their interdependency and application.

Duration is expressed primarily through representation and difference. Deleuze, in *Bergsonism* (1998, p. 26), identified two directions for the representation of

difference in kind: perception, or 'that which puts us into matter'; and memory or 'that which puts us at once into the mind'. Using the 'brushstroke' paintings of David Reed establishes a distinction between particular states of consciousness, of the artist as spectator (matter) and the artist as maker (memory), both during and after the making. In this project movement between cognitive operations of representation as matter and memory form a mechanism for the experience of time as duration.¹⁸

Key to the recognition of duration is the leaving of a trace of a gesture as a mark in a surface. This characteristic has many different incarnations, exemplified by a turn away from mediated to un-mediated processes. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 4. The direct or indirect presence of the artist through gesture influences and changes ones perception of duration. Hence in this chapter I will demonstrate how this permeates even through mediated processes, such as photocopying, scanning and inkjet printing, compared with more un-mediated real time painting processes. Peter Geimer 2007, cites examples of how a trace of reality permeates into a photogram, Richard Shiff 1991, identifies touch as an important feature of modernism and David Joselit 2014, highlights an 'intelligent touch' in the work of Jacqueline Humphries. I transfer these as signifiers of duration to different developments in the practical research.

¹⁸ The term matter is also Bergson's actual and memory corresponds to the virtual.

In the *Found Object Scans* (2017-2018), I discuss the presence of duration as cognitive movement, through the process of recognition and unrecognition. A wanting in the viewer to identify subject matter as a named thing mirrors ideological movement of something to nothing. Different illusions of movement as present in animation and seriality, are also discussed in relation to the experience of time.

A sensation of immediacy, as conveyed through a composite of different gestures like sweeping, wiping and blurring, also changes duration. These are identified in the *Untitled No Idea* (2016-2017) series and in the *Composite Works* (2017-2018). In the submission, their juxtaposition with the mediated works is intended to highlight intuitive processes and create a multiplicity of durations.

3.1 David Reed's 'Splitting and Doubling': an alteration of consciousness as Duration

Duration is a non-numerical multiplicity; that is, it is perceived through many random layers of different experience. These are not dialectic, in the Hegelian sense, but occur rather as unquantifiable temporal circumstance. In the practical research, different situations have led to unexpected occurrences and accidents, sometimes beyond conscious control. These have influenced outcomes. For example, the project began with images created due to the mechanical failure of a photocopier. Ultimately, these were subject to the sensitivities of the artist and his selectivity. To accept the intuition, even to a small degree, has countered

deterministic thinking. During the making, I became subject to a movement of consciousness by degrees which, in turn, is explainable as duration. Through this example the condition of duration can be discussed as both in things as matter and in us as states of consciousness or as memory.

To return to David Reed's 'brushstroke' paintings made in 1975, the artist was very aware of the process he employed and how this remained visible as gesture in the final work, as marks in brushstrokes. However he was also affected by the actual circumstance of making the paintings and his own cognitive movements. For Reed, the experience of making the work, and its specific point in time, became subject to a shifting in and out of consciousness. There were periods where he was immersed within the process and had no sense of self. There were also other periods, where he became acutely aware of his actions, as if he was astral travelling and split into another person, observing himself from a distance, like a stepping in and outside of himself, from artist maker to artist spectator (Siegel 2017, p. 6).

More disturbing still was Reed's feeling that even as he made a work, he was outside the painting as well as inside it. That is, even as he was engaged in the experience of making a painting he could not work quickly enough to prevent his consciousness from 'leaking' into the outside world, watching himself make it at the same time (Siegel 2017, p. 6).

Katy Siegel (Siegel 2017, p. 6) describes this feeling of moving in and out of consciousness as Reed's 'splitting and doubling' condition. His preoccupation with it would continue to the present. In this way the artist is able to experience a sensation of multiple durations. These are conveyed to the viewer, in the completed work, through the distinct materiality of paint. A brushstroke, in Reed's case, transfers a body gesture through mark-making and significantly (as identified during the previous chapter) the perception of movement. It is this movement, present in various states, which contains duration. Hence it is both in the thing (the physical matter of a brushstroke) and in the viewer as illusion (memory).

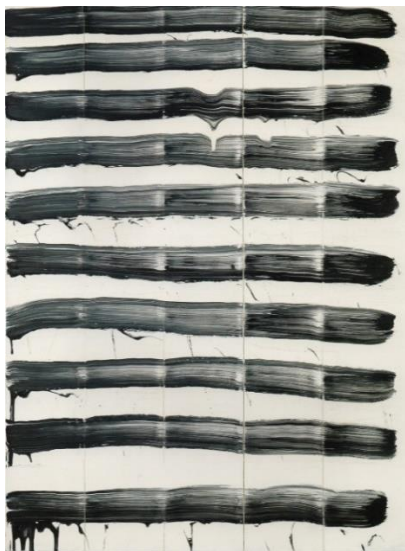


Figure 27. David Reed, *#90*, 1975, oil on canvas, 193 cm x 142.2 cm

'Painting objectifies a fundamental existential question: How can one meet the flow of experience, first as a producer (painter) and then as a consumer (spectator)?' (Cook, Hudson & Joselit 2014, p. 15)

An awareness of this condition is what inspired the turn towards un-mediated processes in the practical research. After *The Same As It Never Was* (2015), I felt a type of disconnected 'mannerism' in the method¹⁹ in that there was an extra stage during the making process which moved further away from the initial photocopier accident. The final works were a stylistic representation of the photocopier drawings, another entirely separate incarnation. This position is clarified by Patrick Monahan in his article *The Mechanics of Mannerism*.

Just like figures in a mannerist painting, we have exchanged the currency of innate passion for a series of prescribes gestures. With unprecedented technological and emotional means, how far from the source of our own humanity will contemporary life allow us to stray? As art and society fold into themselves, we come precariously close to losing track (2011, p. 21).

In the next phase of work, the *Untitled No Idea* (2016-2017) series, I removed this element because it felt prescribed and disconnected.²⁰ A change in procedure added immediacy and a sensation of momentum to the process which in turn created new and different layers of duration.

¹⁹ In *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*, (2004, p.437) Ian Chilvers acknowledges some confusion as to exactly what this term may mean. 'Thus while the term 'Mannerism' can generally be taken to imply an elegant, refined, artificial, self-conscious, and court style, the shade of meaning to be attached to it varies very much according to the context and the outlook of the writer using it.' I emphasize, for the purpose of this discussion 'elegant, refined, artificial, self-conscious and court style.' Mannerism requires the display of technical precision as talent and is contrived and pre-determined.

²⁰ The implication of this condition on the intuition and the turn from mediated to un-mediated processes will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3.2 Gesture

In Chapter 2, I have already discussed types of gestures, expressed through the actual movement of their application: duration is the product of this movement. Process has implications for duration and it is possible to present a different type of duration through mediated and un-mediated techniques. Concurrently, across these two methods I have also demonstrated how each may expand the notion of mechanisation. This is not the exclusive domain of the machine, as the human hand can also deliver another iteration. Degrees of mechanisation alter one's perception of time, as a sequence of memories, and this is just one of many durations.

3.21 Mediated Gesture – Wade Guyton

Devices such as photocopiers, computer software and inkjet printers possess a unique signature gesture of their own. For Wade Guyton, these devices function as surrogates for the artist himself. The marks within his paintings are usually that of an inkjet printer but these are not without his own physical presence or influence. In some instances, he directly manipulates the gesture by pulling at the canvas as it is fed through the printer and even re-feeds the same piece through multiple times (Deitch 2012, p. 137). These actions or interferences in normal processing, achieve ruptures and inconsistencies and, in turn, a particular type of mechanised gesture. Guyton applies intuitive method and the ingredients

of his practice, namely his collaboration with machines, expands what painting may become.

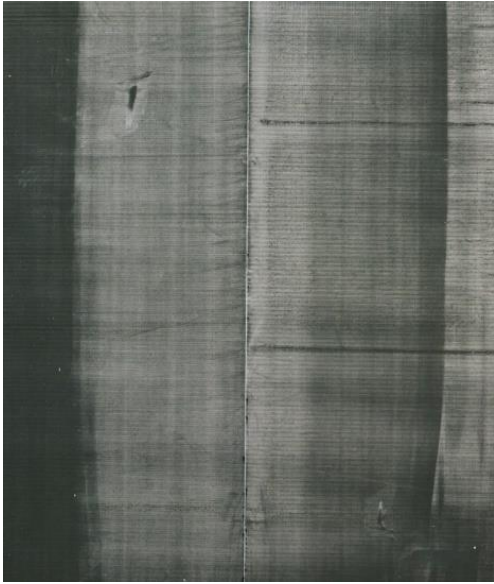


Figure 28. Wade Guyton, *Untitled*, 2011, inkjet on linen, 325 cm x 275 cm

These strategies are far removed from convention; however, through decisions about scale and presentation, Guyton situates this work in succession to artists like Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko.²¹ 'Painting evolves. Moving from the stick to the brush to the Epson printer. And it's hard to say what's felt anymore, you know? Technology is our felt reality' (Rachel Kushner, cited in Deitch 2012, p.143). The degree of mediation employed by Guyton is extreme because conventional representations of painterly gesture are replaced with those made by a secondary device, an ink jet printer. The imaging characteristics and

²¹ In 2004 Guyton's work was associated with a reinvestigation of formalist abstraction. He was uncomfortable with this and reacted by inserting representational elements into his imagery. (Rothkopf, S, 2002, p.21)

subsequent stylistic attributes of the printer create a new type of expressivity.

Guyton feels through the printer.

There is an immediacy to Guyton's work: he remains physically connected by manipulating the canvas during printing. Speed and tension transform into marks in the image. His lived experience is relayed through performance. 'Hence they manifest "a present" because they are not copies of a file but a recording of direct action' (Rothkopf 2013, p. 31). The uniqueness of gesture (both Guyton and printer) through intuition and movement creates a duration.²²

There is no direct evidence of the artist's hand in the fourth series of works, the ink-jet prints of scanned found objects (craft wood, resin and rubber bands), plainly titled the *Found Object Scans* (2017-2018) to emphasise process. Instead, this is replaced by the stylistic signature of a photocopier and subsequently a Photoshop software filter. Through the process of photocopying there is still a degree of touch. The found objects are placed on top of the photocopier glass in direct contact with the machine. As a photocopied and scanned product there is a different representation of the image. The process of photocopying, as distinct from photographing, allows for the touch of the artist, albeit indirect and somewhat compromised when compared with un-mediated processes.

²² This is particularly strange and distinct as Guyton's canvas would take some time to feed through the printer, they are large scale. There is a slowness and a meticulousness in the tiny printer lines.

3.22 Trace and Touch in the Mediated Gesture

In *Image as Trace: Speculations about an Undead Paradigm* 2007 Peter Geimer discusses the presence of trace in analogue photography. He states that the photographic image is a trace of reality because it is created through material touch with its subject; the touch of light on paper and film. He argues that this notion of a trace is lost with digital technologies due to image generation and transformation software. Light falls upon a sensor and is converted into numbers as a digital file. There is no direct contact with film or paper therefore the touch of light is lost. (Geimer 2007, p. 8)

Geimer argues that the presence of a photographic trace establishes a connection with reality and enables photographs to convey aura. 'And yet something has happened that Walter Benjamin could never have dreamed of. Photography and film have become auratic in their claim to be a 'vera icon' of the real' (2007, p. 9).

Significantly for this project, Geimer likens the photogram to a footprint that leaves a direct trace of reality. In the fourth series of works, *The Found Object Scans* (2017-2018), the inclusion of photocopying leaves a trace, similar to a photogram (see Figures. 29 and 30). This is retained during scanning and digital manipulation as the number of transformations is extremely small. The absence of a photographic lens amplifies flatness. Despite a lack of surface, there is a felt presence in the final work. This is evident in the artist's aesthetic sensibilities, as

a selector.²³ For example, in *Untitled*, 2017 (see Figure. 30) there are two degrees of blur. One's eyes move between the sharper image on the left and the more dissipated image on the right, retreating again and again, back to the left for a place to rest. This variation in optical movement gives life to the image. Actual touch is not required.

3.23 Photocopies, Inkjet Prints and Different Durations

There is also the movement of recognition through one's desire to identify the image as named thing. This is a particular type of movement between a clarification of a representation of a thing as a photocopy and its dissolving through the application of a Photoshop filter. There is the representation of phenomena as things from the world - that is, craft wood, resin and rubber bands - plus the illusion of another thing altogether as a result of aesthetic transformation. On one hand, this methodology diverges from Malevich's New Realism as there is a thing or something to begin with. Hence the image as art is created as a something-from-something transformation, as opposed to something from nothing. On the other hand, the actual named thing was never an art image to begin with. It was rubbish and in the artist's general vocabulary of images was, in fact, nothing. In summary, its transference from a found object

²³ Image transformation is completed by the software. This creates a release from labour and repetition. The artist has greater freedom of choice through ease of access.

to art object mirrors a something-from-nothing movement. The idea of what may be considered as a subject for painting is expanded²⁴.

The dissolving of this particular named thing is different from Bergson's cube of sugar,²⁵ as it is not a three-dimensional object and hence its capacity for difference is less. There is only the illusion of an image as in reality it is reduced to ink on paper. It is like Warhol's *Skull* without the ruptures created by the impasto ground. These qualities or complications of movement reflect a different duration, a duration informed by the cognitive process of perception through recognition.²⁶

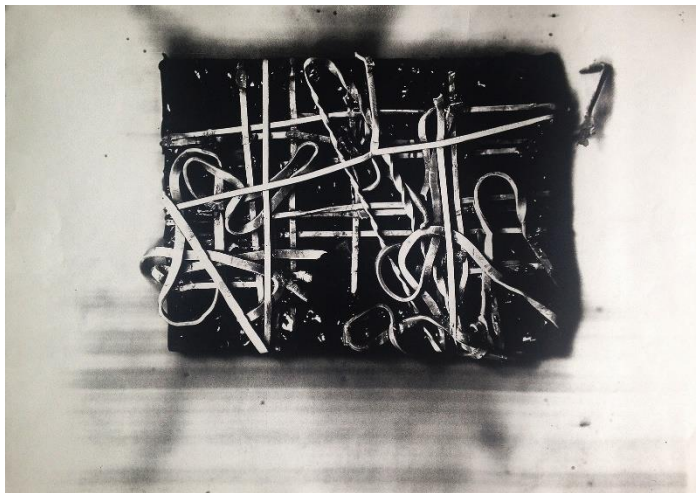


Figure 29. *Photocopy of found objects; craft wood, resin and rubber bands, 2017, plain paper, 29.7 cmx 42 cm*

²⁴ Similar to Warhol's rendering of string in his 'Yarn' pictures. An everyday piece of yarn creates a perceptual rhythm similar to that pioneered by Jackson Pollock.

²⁵ See Duration in Chapter 1.

²⁶ In the case of this fourth series of work, the identification of a thing, or what is it, is more a case of what was it and what has it become?



Figure 30. *Found Object Scan*, 2017, ink jet print on paper, 125 cm x 91.5 cm

3.24 Un-mediated Gesture

‘One must decide the duration of a painting, whether one consumes it in a flash like a picture or inhabits it like a room’ (Cook, Hudson & Joselit 2014, p. 15).

Ultimately duration is recognised through the perception of phenomena as temporal experience. It is not exclusive to any particular medium, instead it is simply different. The un-mediated gesture, suspended as a mark on a substrate is a powerful conduit for the transference of lived experience. This is because it possesses a surface in addition to its image. The particular texture of this surface leaves a trace and it is the immediacy of this trace which is perceived as duration. Immediacy creates a sensation of a moment frozen in time.

David Joselit identifies a characteristic in the work of Jacqueline Humphries called ‘intelligent touch’. This is typified by a certain mechanisation of gesture. As he states ‘the painterly gesture, presumed to emerge from the affective

sensation and manual virtuosity of the artist, is mechanized in some way – made to represent the automatic transcription of information’ (Cook, Hudson & Joselit 2014, p. 15). This is evident in the specific repetition of gesture, presented as a moving visual field. Humphries works are characterised by a mechanised gestural rhythm.



Figure 31. Jacqueline Humphries, *Untitled*, 2011, oil and enamel on linen, 203.2 cm x 221 cm

Un-mediated gestures in the practical research are not random; they are also subject to a rhythm through repetition. This reflects the performance of the artist’s body gestures during making. These are made in response to the position of the canvas, either horizontal or vertical, its size and proportions. The physicality of being in a space is transferred through gesture into the painting. A direct body presence is pronounced in paint. Importantly, the artist’s touch is still indirect and mediated to a degree through a brush or equivalent apparatus.

The circumstances of the time and place of making as a perceived or illusory space are in the painting as gesture. Humphries own performed gestures are suspended as traces in the marks in the surface of paint. Duration is transferred to the viewer through the immediacy of gesture. These are a direct recording of a lived experience of time. This type of aesthetic painterly sensation is echoed through much of the practical research, as a field of perceptual movement, particularly in the un-mediated paintings.



Figure 32. *Untitled, 2016*, mixed media on 300gsm university cartridge, 122 cm x 86 cm

3.3 Animation

Animation in this context means to assign life to inanimate phenomena, through the illusion of movement. In the practical research frames of movement are exposed and made plain, in order to emphasise the illusion of motion. The

viewer has time to reflect on these mechanisms and contemplate Bergson's mind and matter dualism. It is achievable to recognise both the illusion (that is, movement) and the actuality of its components as a painting. This deconstruction of movement as process is a lived experience and requires viewer interaction.

The speed of animated movement is relational to the properties of the artwork and the position of the viewer. It is rarely pre-determined,²⁷ and it is these ingredients which also achieve the sensation of duration. Different permutations of animated movement change the way time is perceived. Within the studio work this is exemplified by stop-motion animation, series format and the arrangement of multiple panels as composites. Animated movement is achieved through the sequencing of individual images. This is different from gestural movement. Through different aesthetic elements one may experience multiple durations.

3.31 Photocopied Duration

The reproduction and repetition of images, through photocopying, enabled a different approach to the illusion of movement. This adds further durations. In

Developer malfunction photocopied 81 times enlarged at 200% projected at

²⁷ There is only one work which could be considered a conventional animation, *Developer malfunction photocopied 81 times enlarged at 200% projected at intervals of 0.2 of a second*. I considered removing a set frame speed and instead presenting a Power point open to manipulation by the viewer. The timing of each frame could be set at will, enabling the viewer to discover the illusion of movement.

intervals of 0.2 of a second (2015), the title simply describes how the image and the work was made. The speed of interval for each frame is slow enough to register each as a separate image, but also fast enough to create fleeting illusions of movement through space. Importantly, the new material in each image is photocopier noise, the degradation of the image due to its repeated enlargement.²⁸ Like the initial photocopier developer malfunction which produced the image, each frame in the animation is also a signature gesture of the photocopier. The illusion of moving through space is literally achieved through the copiers generic enlargement function. An understanding of this process adds a further level of mediation to the work. One can also reflect on reproduction as a method for illustrating continuity. In this way the process of enlargement could produce images indefinitely. A viewer can recognise both the still image and its illusion as animation. Therefore time (the stillness of each frame) and space (the illusion of movement) are separated.

²⁸ After an initial discovery this became difficult to replicate as the appearance of 'noise' or 'static' was reliant on photocopier exposure settings. These required adjustment in 'service mode'.



Figure 33. *Developer malfunction photocopied 81 times enlarged at 200% projected at intervals of 0.2 of a second, 2015, Microsoft Power point Presentation, dimensions variable (work on left)*

In *The Same As It Never Was* (2015) this was more pronounced in tandem with other works, particularly compared with *All and Nothing* (2015). This is a series of nine panels, each containing a photocopy drawing screen-printed in vinyl ink through a coarse 63T mesh. This deposits more ink than a conventional sized mesh and imbues the image with surface presence. Photocopy drawings are up-scaled yet the proportions of an A4 page are retained. The left panel is an image of a drum blade malfunction (see Figure 21) and each proceeding image is a 600% enlargement of the previous. This process of enlarging is the same as in *Developer malfunction photocopied 81 times enlarged at 200% projected at intervals of 0.2 of a second* (2015). An illusion of movement is achieved by photocopier enlargement. The images in both works reach a point where the drum blade malfunction is dissolved through enlargement, and subsequent

images are simply the incidental noise or residue of an image as a result of photocopying. It is very difficult to achieve a perfectly clean, consistent black surface like the inkjet printer lines in the images of Wade Guyton. They are unique to the machine and exemplify in kind difference.

The illusion of movement in serial imagery is activated by the concurrent motion of the viewer's body, quite the opposite of conventional animation which requires the body to be still as frames appear to move. These procedural differences, incorporating viewer interaction, change one's perception of time. They enable a reflection on its variation and how its perception is subject to difference. It is not measured like a clock, but experienced through the work as duration.



Figure 34. *All and nothing* 2015, vinyl ink on marine ply, 47cm x 65.5cm x 9 panels.

3.32 Immediacy: The Sweep

To sweep paint with a broom is a big departure from screen-printing a photocopier accident. A return to real-time painting techniques created a different manifestation of duration. The sweep of a broom, as painted gesture, replaced the equivalent photocopier gesture. It has its own limitations but also achieved an amplification of movement through the trace of paint not evident previously. As part of the overall image the sweep provides a visual inter-zone between brushstrokes, the blurring of paint with a squeegee and wiping with a rag. The sweep is rarely the final gesture made and is often over-worked by others. Its implementation, during the sequence of production, extends the making session or the life of the painting and adds to a taxonomy of marks.

The sweep implies movement, through the actuality of the trace on its surface and through its direction. It also implies space. This is perceived through overlapping as well as proportion in relation to other gestures. (The perception of both movement as time and space as matter creates duration). For example, in *Untitled Composite Work* (2017), below, the large portion of swept paint in the lower centre implies movement while also maintaining a position in relation to other elements. This position is in the foreground as it has been applied on top; its implementation is therefore more recent in the sequence of making.

Subsequently, it becomes a focal point. It can be perceived both as part of a picture and also as an actual broom sweep. This is re-enforced by the addition of

a canvas board into the bottom right. The spatial mechanisms of painting are expanded to incorporate actual things (the canvas board) and this in turn emphasises the 'thingness' of paint (Titmarsh 2017, p. 6). The resulting movement between these layers of perception is duration.



Figure 35. *Untitled Composite Work*, 2017, mixed media on canvas, 164cmx 145cm

The sweep itself, as gesture, has its own duration, and this is expressed through immediacy of application. In the painting this gesture is frozen in the surface as a mark. Its trace implies movement and a sensation of time. In this case, immediacy has a quickness. This can be seen in the work of Karl Otto Gotz (1914-2017).



Figure 36. Karl Otto Gotz, *Plein 5*, 1995, 220cmx 200cm

In *Plein 5*, 1995 by Gotz, a sensation of immediacy is consistent across the entire painting. It appears to have been executed in one sitting.²⁹

3.4 Composite Duration

In Chapter 2, I discussed how Bergson's notion of the composite is present as layers of different types of movement. The perception of these different layers as one conglomerate of sensory input is composite experience. In the practical research, I presented a composite of different processes.³⁰ These have been detailed in the previous chapter. In addition to processes I explore collections of different gestures - for example, the sweep and the scrape - in a single work, to create a different type of movement and hence duration. These form a

²⁹ Gotz placed his canvas on the floor and applied paint with a broom.

³⁰ I choose not to paint over inkjet and instead juxtapose different mediums.

fluctuating and noisy visual field. Composite experience is conveyed both within the work (through layers of different paint gesture) and between different mediums across individual works.

In the third series of practical research, the *Composite Works* (2017-2018), I applied the notion of the composite directly to the method of production. I attempted multiple canvases and panels in the one sitting. The scale of canvas from the second series, *Untitled No Idea* (2016), was continued and two further canvases (the first exactly half scale and the second one quarter scale) were added. Three canvas board paintings, of a much smaller scale, were also incorporated. I will detail the process in the next chapter. The proposition was that, while each was different, their aggregate parts would present as a singular collection of experience because they were made at the same time. Unlike the example by Gotz, there are multiple layers of different durations expressed through a variety of overlapping gestures.



Figure 37. Studio view *Composite Work*, August 2017

In the submission, a composite strategy will achieve a multiplicity of durations. This is both within the boundaries of individual works and in the different processes and mediums of the entire body of work. Certain durations, as expressed through different aesthetic mechanisms, will carry over between unlikely sources. For example, an interaction between ink jet print and paint on canvas will create a different and challenging sensation altogether.

3.5 Touch

In *Constructing Physicality*, Richard Shiff (1991) discusses the importance of touch in modernist/post-modernist practice as a point of differentiation with older modes of painting. He associates pre-modernist painted space with transparency, which sought to achieve illusionistic depth similar to a view through a window. This is apparent in old master glazing techniques. By contrast, an important modernist development is the emphasis on surface and opacity or the presence of the artist's touch. Contrary to illusionistic window space this is a different actuality because the artist is present through a trace of his or her touch and hence is there in record (Shiff 1991, p. 42).

Earlier in this chapter, I cited Peter Geimer's position in relation to the potential for a photograph to leave a trace due to the touch of light during the image capturing process, and how this logic of contact could be transferred to photograms and even photocopying. Using Bergson's notion of the composite this project presents both Geimer and Shiff's positions as different but valid as

composite matter. The common factor is touch, whether direct or indirect or even as ephemeral as light itself.

Both Geimer and Shiff's positions can be transferred to un-mediated (real-time painting) and mediated (photocopying, scanning, screen-printing) processes.

They demonstrate the presence of touch in different mediums and discuss its specificity or the degree of its manifestation. The immediacy of the snap and of the painted gesture function in unison, presenting the life of a moment in time as frozen gesture. As a composite of gestures they demonstrate the multiplicity of duration.

Conclusion

Duration is essentially consciousness responding to temporal experience. It can be perceived in any type of matter. This research positions painting as the supplier of certain types of matter which initiate duration through different degrees of experience. These are juxtaposed as a composite of different mediums and processes.

Evidence of touch, through the trace of a mark is subject to authorship, mediated or un-mediated. The author, being human or machine, is also subject to different types of image generation. The addition of surface, through painterly mark-making adds further layers of duration. However, these factors are differences of degree, and paintings with almost no surface, made by machines, also have

duration. These many durations form a multiplicity of experience which is transferred from artist to viewer. These different facets of duration have been identified in the work of Wade Guyton and Jacqueline Humphries. The practical submission will contain a summary of key works over the entirety of this project. It will emphasise different processes and outcomes but is unified by the same methodology: the creation of something from nothing.

Multiple durations are also evident in layers of gesture. As separate components these contain an immediacy, but they are often part of a collection of contrasting marks on a surface. There is both spatial and directional movement and, importantly, there is an abundance of such activity. This is a noisy something, a flurry of anxious gesture, as paint is pushed and scraped away, a Sisyphean toil of life activity (see Chapter 5). This is Bergson's life force, his '*élan vital*', manifest as movement and in turn through performed gesture perceived as duration.

Duration is more than one moment, it is plural not singular and these collections of difference convey the multiplicity of perceived experience. This is evident in Series 3, the *Composite Works* (2017-2018) as multiple panels made at the same time and in the collections of different gestures which interrelate to form an image (see Figure 38).



Figure 38. Studio view: *Composite Work*, 2017, work in progress

I have discussed how movement is a mechanism for the presence of duration. This has extended the range of this principle from Chapter 2. David Reed's 'splitting and doubling' condition, as movement of conscious states, is a recognition of movement within Bergson's dualism of memory and matter. During the making one's presence transfers between a subconscious state of doing and a conscious state of recollection. The former has immediacy and a sense of speed, the latter becomes slow and considered. These are different durations. This example inspired a reflection on mediated and un-mediated processes and initiated change.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the turn which is a radical shift in the process used to make the practical research. After *The Same As It Never Was* (2015), I developed a desire to rekindle the excitement and immediacy I experienced

when the photocopier malfunctioned and created its own images. The artworks I had made for this series were mannered representations of these images. The process of their making had become like colouring in because I was filling in space with a pre-determined image. These works are like props for a theatrical set. There was greater risk and excitement in a turn towards a real-time, un-mediated painting process.

I will also discuss intuition as method by breaking it down into procedural components such as not thinking, not knowing and the deferral of consciousness. These categories will be related to key developments in contemporary practice and in the practical research. Intuition, as a further principle of Bergson's philosophy, will further elaborate a new framework for Expanded Abstract Painting.

Chapter Four: Intuition

Introduction

The next principle of Henri Bergson's philosophy I will use to frame an ontology of Expanded Abstract Painting is intuition. In this chapter, it is expanded into three strategies: non-thinking; not knowing; and deferral. The unpacking of intuition in this way will reveal its different manifestations and, importantly, the many layers of its influence in this project. The research will show that intuition is quite different from impulse or instinct and is a fully functional method of working.

To not think, not know and to defer conscious thought are all strategies to act intuitively. Non-thinking assists in the removal of pre-determination and creates a greater freedom to act. A process such as tracing releases the burden to manufacture an image and allows for the exploration of alternative themes. Non-thinking also changes the presence of the artist, as evident in gesture, through an enhanced mechanisation of mark-making. There is a disconnection or nonchalance. Not knowing further assists non-thinking by allowing a freedom to act. Strategies such as the erasure of imagery are examples of how failure may be re-deployed from the negative to the affirmative. The deferral of consciousness makes it possible to give over control to another source, machine or human, to lessen predictability. Other manifestations of deferral involve

strategies like undermining conventional skill and even the idea of abstract painting itself.

Bergson's philosophical method, intuition, has very little in common with how this term is commonly understood, as a vague empathy or feeling. There is nothing impulsive or vague about intuition, which is a rigorous philosophical method for an attunement with the concrete specifics of the real (Grosz 2005, p. 7).

For Bergson, intuition was a method to assist in 'false problems' that arose from deterministic thinking. To act intuitively required the recognition of inherent differences, or 'differences in kind' in phenomena. This grounded experience and countered illusion.

Intuition is primarily experienced through memory. It is to live in tune with duration. As Bertrand Russell stated 'True change can only be explained by true duration; it involves an inter-penetration of past and present, not a mathematical succession of static states' (1987, p. 763). There is no calculated sequencing of events or contrived order; it is instead a composite of reactions to different circumstances.

Intuition as method is a way to continue unimpeded without the constraint of pre-conception. One acts in response to a recognition of difference between ingredients and conditions. The recognition of difference, or the perception of phenomena as they are, adds layers and therefore complicates things. A subject

grows and becomes evident as a result of process. Intuition is not necessarily instinctive or random, but is instead becomes a framework, in the practical research, for performed action.

4.1 Non-Thinking

Non-thinking is a form of cognitive mechanisation; that is, action and production are prioritised before other elements such as representation or pre-conceived content. A basic premise is to act first think later as a matter of degrees or relativity according to circumstance; or at least modify one's thinking to prioritise intuition. In this sense the production of art mirrors any other necessary everyday task, like washing the dishes or spreading butter on toast. Its consequence is to open oneself up to experience, direct and indirect and to act in real time. This is determined by available matter or materials; for example paint, support and selected implements, the studio environment and importantly the artist him or herself. It is to think without predetermination, to experience time as duration both in objects through a recognition of their in kind properties and the consequence of action through process. One cannot literally not think but one can aspire to empty one's mind from pre-conception. Non-thinking is to begin with the idea of nothing.³¹

³¹ See Malevich's *Abstract Realism* in the Introduction.

This openness in process is also transferred into the completed work as a receptacle for aesthetic experience as abstract painting. In *The Open Work* (1989) Umberto Eco discussed the complexity of perceived content in painting. A painting is subject to variable interpretations by the author and the viewer 'the viewer can (indeed must) choose his own points of view, his own connections, his own directions' (p. 86). Therefore a degree of freedom through interpretation is transferred to the viewer. One can aspire to experience a work of art (as well as make it) without thinking.

A product of non-thinking is a distance evident in the image and measured in the specifics of expressivity as a trace on a surface. It is a distance away from a conventional evidencing of the artist's physical presence as gesture towards an alternative state. Conventional expression of human qualities is substituted for mechanisation. I first encountered this in the drawing and painting of Andy Warhol. I will use this as an example to explain these points further.

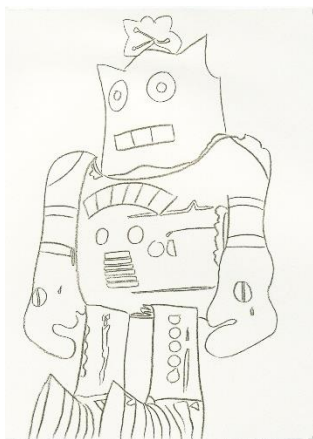


Figure 39. Andy Warhol, *Moon Explorer Robot*, 1983, graphite on paper, 31 1/2 x 21 1/2 inches

In *Moon Explorer Robot* (1983) above, Warhol outlines the image of a toy robot in pencil, as a tracing either from a Polaroid photograph of the actual thing or its packaging (Kernan 2000, p.5). The act of tracing is a form of mediated technique because it subverts evidence of the artist's hand through a secondary source (the photograph). This intention is consistent with Warhol's use of screen-printing. Lines follow a given image; they are not generated by the mind of the artist. Their path is pre-determined to a degree. As conventional drawings, Warhol's *Toy Drawings* are lobotomised; that is, they achieve little more than a filling in of space. The action of tracing requires a diversion of cognitive operations. The process is repetitive and hence mechanised. It is an example of non-thinking.

Moon Explorer Robot is not however, a conventional drawing. It emphasises conceptual content above technical skill in precise rendering. There is liberation in its release from its maker and its disregard for the display of talent. Its mechanised gesture expresses a new type of machine/human hybrid feeling and in Warhol's tracing method has consistency of motion, through a uniformly applied line. The 'snapshot' duration of the photograph is transferred into the drawings. The drawing has no history of mark-making; that is, one cannot discern which line was made first or last. A distancing of the artist's presence, through non-thinking as tracing creates an entirely different duration.

Non-thinking, as a strategy for intuitive action, is applied throughout the practical research. It is most apparent in the photocopier drawings. For example,

in *Glitch in the Machine* (2015), a photocopy drawing is scanned and enlarged as an inkjet print. This transformation created an equivalent visual weight with other works in the same series, as compared with its original state as a black and white photocopy on plain A4 paper. The lines in the surface of the image are an unexpected by-product of photocopier enlargement. They were not drawn by a human hand. Yet the image possesses a depth of feeling, through its heavy and grainy tonal inconsistencies, similar to that of traditional painting and drawing.

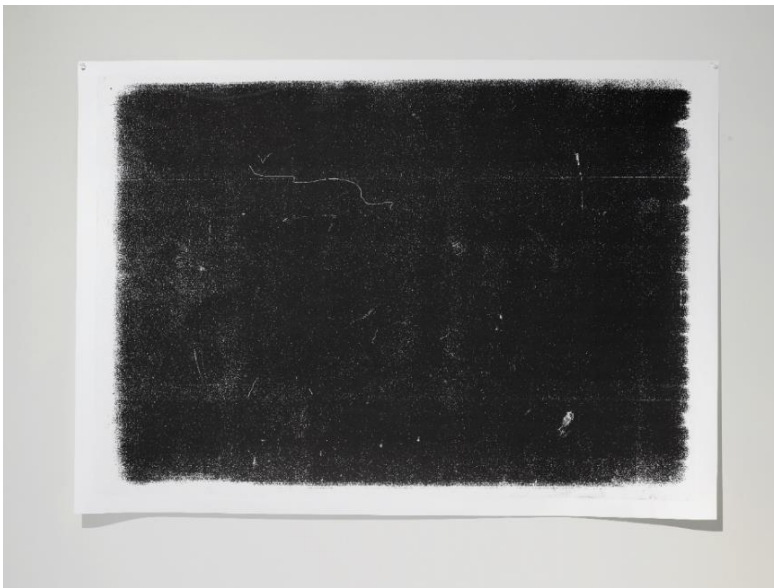


Figure 40. *Glitch in the Machine*, 2015, inkjet print on matte paper 128cmx 91cm

4.12 Nonchalance

A sensation of mechanisation can also be achieved through un-mediated processes. This is quite different from Warhol's Toy Drawings because it involves the direct application of paint. Hence there is a bodily presence, as gesture. Its value to this project is that it demonstrates another permutation of intuition as

method and that it is possible to express a different type of mechanisation within marks made directly by the hand of the artist. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

In a catalogue essay about the work of Albert Oehlen, Massimiliano Gioni refers to this as nonchalance: 'he taught himself to appear naturally sophisticated, practicing what the Mannerists would have called the art of sprezzatura, a certain nonchalance, meant to conceal any sense of artfulness: a perfectly calculated spontaneity' (Gioni 2015, p. 12). Similarly, in his article *Provisional Painting*, Raphael Rubenstein employs the same term to describe a 'carelessness' in the work of Mary Heilman (2009, p. 5).

There is no deferral to a secondary device for the generation of an image. Instead, the artist defers to the qualities of paint itself. This medium, like a photograph or a photocopy, has its own unique characteristics. In his 'finger paintings', Albert Oehlen expresses a degree of immediacy through the quick application of paint (and in some cases the application of found objects such as a toilet seat).

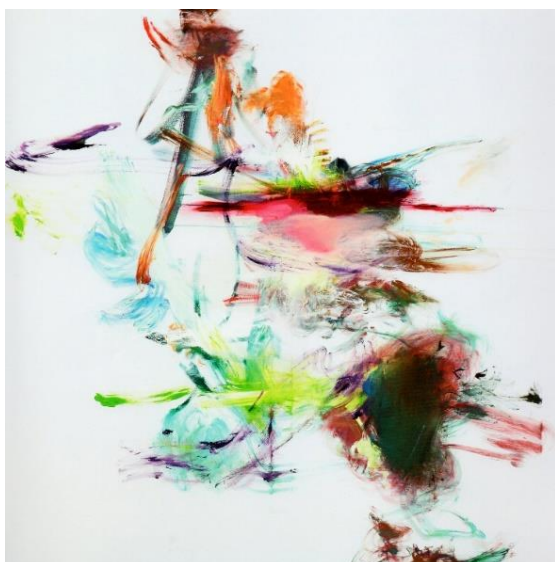


Figure 41. Albert Oehlen, *FM 4*, 2008, oil on canvas, 150cmx 160cm

In *FM 4*, 2008, Oehlen applies a predominately cool colour selection directly to a white (or light grey) ground. Paint appears to have been applied wet on wet. A sensation of speed is amplified by an economy of marks - not that there are too few but that blank areas of canvas, by virtue of what is not there, add immediacy. Space has been divided into three horizontals, intersected by a green vertical line (top left) and other zones of wiping or an over-layering of painted gesture. Oehlen's repertoire of marks establishes a figure ground movement while the wiping of paint also makes a large shape that creates a focal point, a component that draws the eye.

There is also a thickness in the physicality of the paint surface.³² This subverts conventional notions of pictorial space in favour of flatness and surface. Like

³² See p.11 Titmarsh, M, 2017, *Expanded Painting. Ontological Aesthetics and the Essence of Colour*, Bloomsbury Publishing Place, London.

most of Oehlen's oeuvre, his finger paintings push the boundaries of acceptability. 'For Oehlen, the apathetic, almost absent-minded filling of the canvas with different kinds of shapes and strokes was itself a kind of non-composition' (Godfrey 2015, p. 52). Nonchalance or absent-mindedness equals a freedom to paint.

To not think is a method for intuitive beginning and it is unstable and fleeting. In the practical research, it created a momentary thought buffer for the instance just after the first decisions were considered: which colour, which brush, which shape? Only an instant for everything following is reactionary and a sequential building of something.

A nonchalance, similar to that identified in Oehlen's work, is also present in the practical research. For example, in *Untitled (No Idea) No. 3*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm, there is a loose pictorial structure. A large broom sweep to the right of centre creates a focal point which implies a leftward motion towards a blue vertical line teetering on the edge of the canvas. This sensation of motion, through the direction of gesture continues in various permutations across the entire surface. It is a disorientating image, which feels as though it has been hung upside down. Compared with the Oehlen example, it is overloaded because there is no space for quiet. There is a suggestion of a white ground but this oscillates between foreground and background. Oehlen's paint gestures by comparison sit rather comfortably upon a white ground.



Figure 42. *Untitled (No idea) No. 3*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm

A nonchalance was required to apply certain gestures. The blue vertical line has a function within the sequence of movement, but its gesture was made quickly and with force of application. It was considered only briefly.

Lived experience is recorded through gesture as action. This is frozen in the surface but moving in the mind. There are layers of duration, both in gesture as a recording of body movement and a time of making and in the physical presence of paint. The recognition of the matter of paint as having unique properties compared with other mediums is its difference in kind. Nonchalance, as a form of non-thinking activates the intuition and facilitates action.

4.2 Not Knowing

Not knowing, as a separate method assists in the application of not thinking. It facilitates continuation of action through the creation of a buffer zone. To not know is to open oneself up to possibility otherwise unattainable through deterministic methods. Not knowing extends the elements of surprise and wonder.

Not knowing is not experience stripped clean of knowledge, but a mode of thinking where knowledge is put into question, made restless or unsure. Not knowing unsettles the illusory fixity of the known, shaking it up a little in order to conceive of things differently (Cocker 2013, p. 131).

By erasing large portions of an image with white paint, Christopher Wool uses gesture to redact portions of an image. He creates an unknown zone. To conclude an image in this way, simply as erased, is an example of affirmative failure. There is no mistake, rather the artists decision to erase, as production, is transferred to painterly gesture and absorbed into the image itself, like an extension of action painting. To erase is both to delete what was once there and to add a new element; the white brush or roller gesture and its inferred negative space or in-between zone. At any one point, Wool's images contain degrees of layering and these have a specific perceptual quality. Like a readymade gesture, Wool's erasure transports an everyday activity (the application of 'white out' over text to correct a mistake) into the visual syntax of his image.

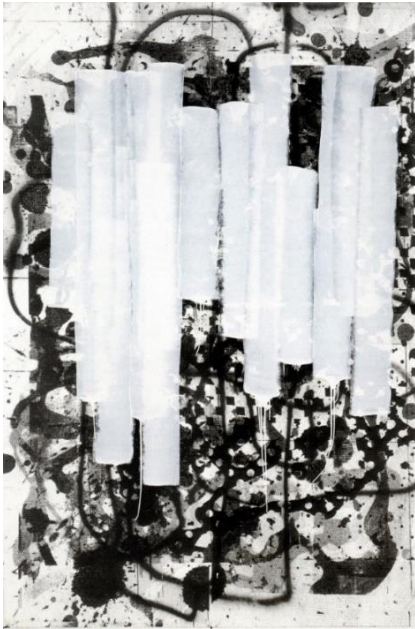


Figure 43. Christopher Wool, *Untitled*, 2001, enamel and silkscreen ink on linen, 274.3 cm x 182.9 cm

In the un-mediated works, not knowing prolongs non-thinking. This maintains an awareness of paint as matter and a sensitivity to the uncertain behaviour of this material. Not knowing keeps the senses open and extends completion. But given this strategy, how is one to finish the painting? To achieve this something must be realised and hence must extend into the known. This proposition is also subject to movement.

...the richest form of communication - richest because most open – requires a delicate balance permitting the merest order within the maximum disorder. This balance marks the limit between the undifferentiated realm of utter potential and a field of possibilities (Eco 1989, p. 98).

The motion of these circumstances achieves a product, a collection of painterly gestures. They are continuous. The work is complete when the surface is full and there is room for no more, or alternatively the gesture takes on a distinct aura. The making slows, as does the movement between artist-maker and spectator, and the latter state becomes constant. The desire to act is replaced by a perceiving. The slowing of action when no more is required is also subject to drying time. Acrylic paint and mediums are used and while the addition of retarder slows this process it also negates impasto qualities. In short, a quick drying time forces a resolution and also assists intuition.

A slowing of activity creates a procedural space to fill, with thinking and perceiving. However, the desire to keep acting, albeit slowly, does not stop and is carried over to the next work: a point of resistance; the drying of paint; the filling of empty space; a period of measured time; physical exhaustion; the clutter of space with mess; are sometimes required for completion.

A series of un-mediated paintings was completed and exhibited at the Henry Jones Art Hotel in Hobart during April 2017. The body of work was titled *Untitled; (No Idea)*. It is Series 3 of the practical research. To label an artwork *Untitled* is to leave it open to association and to remove complications associated with the addition of a prescriptive written narrative. Consistent with Umberto Eco's proposition, 'The open work assumes the task of giving us an image of discontinuity. It does not narrate it; it is it' (1989, p. 90).

The artwork is simply there, like any other thing in the world and is open to interaction and interpretation. The addition of *No Idea* contradicts this strategy as it implies an ideological position: no idea. It is a title and is distinct from *Untitled* in that there is a suggestion of something to initiate a particular type of enquiry or perceived experience. As a title it is self-demeaning and implies worthlessness for to have no idea is to remove or resist the assigning of meaning. Or more significantly, it separates the need for substance via idea as a necessary mechanism for meaning. Process as ideology can generate meaning through experience without the illustration of a narrative. *No Idea*, as a title is a method to consider the absurdity of meaning and how it is created and assigned.³³



Figure 44. *Untitled (No Idea)*, 2017, exhibition detail, Henry Jones Art Hotel in collaboration with Colville Gallery, Hobart

³³ It is also expressive of a paradox, for to have no idea is in itself to have an idea.

To have 'no idea' as a title extends not knowing into the realm of the spectator, as separate from the experience of the artist-maker. It is implied as a signifier. It provides insights into how this may be applied as a method for the activation of the intuition within the viewer/audience.

4.3 Deferral

The deferral of one's conscious thoughts, over to something else, creates a space for action, which, in turn, is a mechanism for the intuition. Non-thinking and not knowing are methods to defer consciousness. This section will outline further ways to achieve this: mediation; strategy; abstract painting; subject matter; and collaboration.

To use mediated processes, particularly a photocopier and computer software to generate images, is a deferral of consciousness away from the artist. It outsources some creative responsibility to a machine. In the practical research it was primarily a way to continue with the medium of abstract painting where all others felt exhausted. It subverted traditional notions of authorship, it expanded the definition of collaboration to include machines and it provided a distinct visual signature, the photocopier gesture. There was exhilaration when the photocopier malfunctioned and strange new captivating images appeared.

Wade Guyton's use of everyday machines, and the fact that he did not make them or write their software, adds a nonchalance and a freedom of control.

These machines are extensions of someone or something else, so integrating them into a working method is akin to the inclusion of a surrogate collaborator. His use of technology is often referred to as ‘dumb’.

‘I use that word a lot...’ (dumb as distinct from stupid) ‘I’m talking about something that might not utilize a sophisticated process or turn of thought but at the same time opens up in a provocative or intellectual way. It can be a simple rather than alienating route – even funny’ (Wade Guyton as stated during an interview with Donna De Salco in Rothkopf 2013, p. 208).

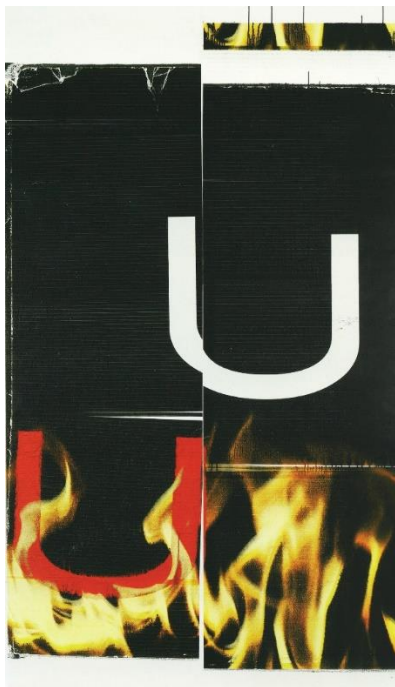


Figure 45. Wade Guyton, *Untitled*, 2006, inkjet on linen, 241.3 cm x 137 cm

In *Untitled* (2006), Guyton includes the letter ‘U’ lifted quite simply from Microsoft Word software. In the mix of all the other elements in the image, the humble, every day, accessible origins of his subjects are like an extension of

Duchamp's readymade strategy. He integrates images of things not conventionally considered art.

The intuitive use of computer software is also evident in the practical research. In the fourth series of works, the *Found Object Scans* (2017-2018) a discarded object from the studio floor is photocopied, scanned and opened in Adobe Photoshop, where it is subject to transformation through very basic filters. This is all readily available at the press of a button. The use of filters does not negate intuition because they are a generic component of the software; that is, they are an in kind difference. The circumstance would change if I were to write the software. This would add determination and pre-meditation.



Figure 46. *Found Object Scan*, 2017, ink jet print on paper, 125 cm x 91.5 cm

In technological terms the origins of this image are very straightforward. Like Warhol's traced *Toy Drawings* and Guyton's Microsoft Word 'U's anyone could do it. Mediation as deferral opens up alternative possibilities for expressivity. The

simplicity and accessibility of process enables a formal play, which is, in turn, evident as projected feeling or *élan vital* in the aesthetic qualities of the image. But to create the machine as well and write the software would block the disconnection with technology required to act intuitively.

4.31 Strategy

The implementation of a pre-determined strategy can also facilitate the deferral of consciousness and activate intuition. For example, the presence of a colour scheme does not contradict other important factors in the method, namely the role of intuition. Charlotte Douglas (1976, p. 54) clarifies this point in relation to Malevich's notions of 'intuitive reason' and 'intuitive will'. She explains that Malevich did acknowledge that the artistic process also required consciousness in tandem with intuition.

Malevich did not advocate intuition as a kind of passive, anti-intellectual approach to art. It is definitely not instinct. He advanced intuition as an active creative principle... For while it rejects analytical logic alone as too limiting, it certainly includes analytical logic and demands of the intellect the greatest effort.

The sequencing of colours, in Series 2 and 3 of the practical research, established a tonal scale. This was done before each painting session. This reasoning became a guarantee against failure. Importantly, it also opened a cognitive space for the performing of gesture, a freedom to apply paint. Colours were simply selected

from pre-mixed pots. This also quickened each painting session. Speed of application, as a performed animation, transferred into duration. This was discussed in the previous chapter as immediacy.



Figure 47. Studio view, journal showing the formulation of a colour sequence in preparation for the *Composite Works* (2017-2018)

A sequencing of colours was also incorporated into the application of a painted ground. This is applied first as an under layer onto white gesso. In the *Composite Works* (2017-2018), it creates a harmonising of potentially contrasting hues. The same limited palette of colours is applied in varying amounts across six canvases of different sizes and shapes. The eye follows selected colours from one panel to the next. In this way, colour harmony achieves unity.



Figure 48. Studio view, *Composite Work* in progress 2017



Figure 49. Studio view, *Composite Work* in progress 2017

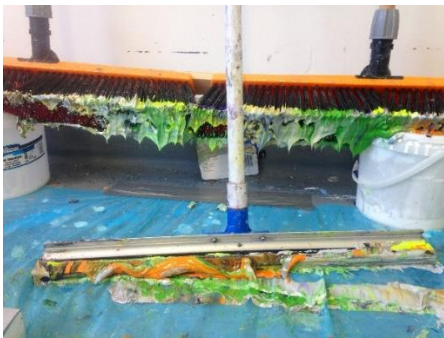


Figure 50. Studio view, *Composite Work* in progress 2017

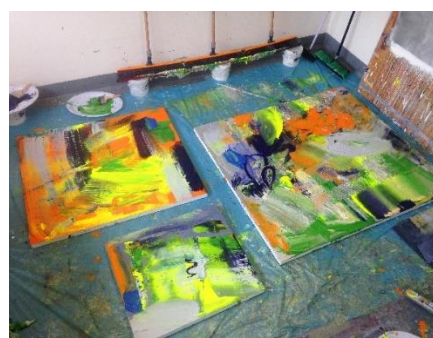


Figure 51. Studio view, *Composite Work* in progress 2017

4.32 The Idea of Abstract Painting as Deferral

The idea of abstract painting, when considered as process, is another strategy for deferral. In the case of Josh Smith, abstract painting legitimises non-thinking, a clearing of cognitive space leaving one to simply produce. The production of painting is important for Smith because quantity (over quality), the publication of inexpensive catalogues, and the processes he employs make them reflect a mass-consumption and over-exposure to imagery prevalent today. He churns out paintings like a machine. (Deitch 2012, p. 6)

By 'abstract painting' I again refer to Malevich's New Realism as it removed the shackles of mimetic representation. But in the case of Josh Smith, repetitive imagery and the mass production of pieces counters any quest for modernist originality. His machine-like approach mirrors that of Warhol's factory or quantity over quality. As Smith stated,

The idea was to make abstract paintings, so I just hit it head on. These were paintings I had always wanted to make, but I didn't have the right kind of confidence. I did not want them to be perceived as silly and romantic the way that painting sometimes can be. I wanted to make sure that regardless of what the ideas in the paintings were, they were presented in a straightforward and worthwhile way. ...When I was working on these paintings I tried to just walk that line. (Smith 2007, p. 3)



Figure 52. Josh Smith, 2007, exhibition detail, Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York

In this way, Smith employs a particular procedural approach to generate meaning. This is not conventional as there is no semiotic code, symbolism or self-expression. His abstract paintings find meaning in their context; that is, they speak more about a contemporary circumstance in which it has become highly improbable to make these types of paintings. They suggest a renegotiation of convention within the paradigm of abstract painting in order to justify their own existence. Smith is able to make the impossible possible. This is explained further in the next section.

4.33 Choice of Subject Matter

In addition to abstract painting and by using his own signature as a subject, Smith was able to 'avoid the trap of choosing between abstraction and figuration' and subsequently free up other elements such as colour and line (Pontegnie 2009, p. 176). Issues relating to visual style and even cliché are brashly confronted. Smith embraces the absurdity of these art conditions from within. The impossibility demons are exorcised and, through a freedom to act due to strategies of deferral, he paints them out.

There has to be a strong presumption that Josh has used the Name Paintings as a device to enter or approach abstraction – a way of avoiding narrative subject matter, yet benefiting from an identifiable image – just as de Kooning used the figure of a woman and many artists, particularly Joan Mitchell, used landscape.
(Wool 2009, p. 166)

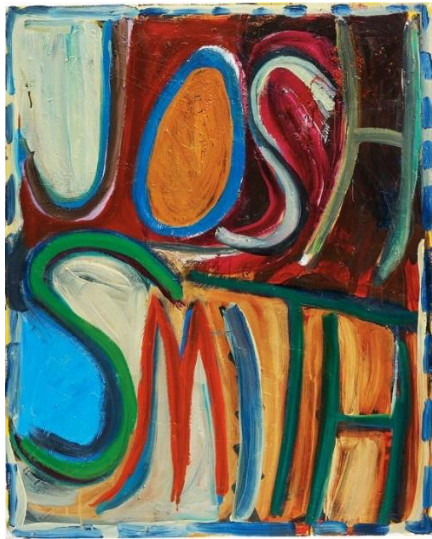


Figure 53. Josh Smith, *Untitled (JSP10173)*, oil on canvas, 152.8 cm x 122 cm

Researching the late work of Andy Warhol transformed the way I perceived his early and mid-career work. His banal choice of subjects - yarn, shadows, a Rorschach, urine and even paint brushstrokes when compared to portraits of celebrities, soup cans and Brillo boxes - were easy to position as part of a lineage of abstract painting because as subjects they were very removed from the representation of everyday appearances. If one considers Warhol's output in reverse, beginning at the end of his career, the distraction or semiotic complication of 'mimetic' subjects is diluted. His *Marilyns* for example lose even more of Marilyn and gain other, more process-orientated associations. In fact, when considered in this way, it is possible to perceive many of Warhol's choices of subject as a strategy for deferral. His works have nothing at all to do with Marilyn the person, but much more to do with his interest in de-humanisation through superficiality and mechanisation. The image of Marilyn, lifted from a

photograph and transformed into a silkscreen stencil gave Warhol a freedom to explore new creative methods. As a subject, it did matter (it was never a portrait) but it also presented a solution to a very difficult problem: quite simply, with what should I begin?

In Christopher Wool's 'Word Paintings' there is a different type of deferral. Like Josh Smith's signatures and Warhol's *Marylins* these provide a way to begin: a ready-made image easily accessible, an avoidance of the issues related to conventional picture making. They are a strategy to by-pass well-trodden terrain and open up new possibility. Deferral also becomes subversion. Wool's 'Word Paintings' are diverse and complex. Some are illegible as text because words are transformed into pictures, whereas others present altogether new meanings and interpretations. They move between interpretative association (signage) and something quite the opposite, a purely aesthetic circumstance.

The paintings, as I say, are paradoxical: the word paintings, in particular, say what they say in large part by not saying all the things they don't say, and this is one reason why they don't say very much. Of course pointing that out gets us nowhere, but then maybe there's nowhere to get. (Lewis 2012, p. 99)

Wool's words may say nothing, however they may also say something as they are just words.

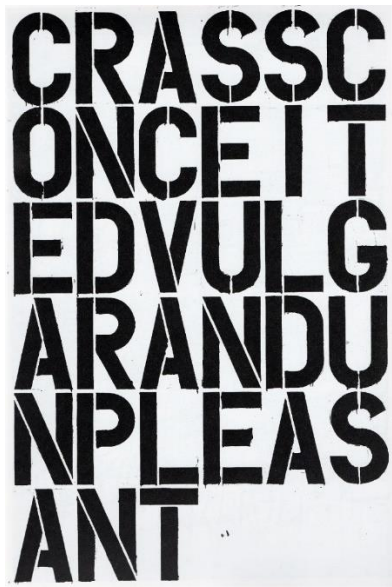


Figure 54. Christopher Wool, 1996, *Untitled*, enamel on aluminium, 274.3 cm x 183 cm

Wool also uses other motifs from readily accessible sources, such as stylised flowers and patterns from Microsoft Clip Art Software. He undermines the autonomy and exclusivity of abstraction by re-positioning common everyday motifs as high art. For periods he gives over to process and there is an engagement with formal play. Through the subversion of convention, he is able to explore new terrain. His is an intuitive re-deployment of words and pictures.

4.34 Collaboration

To collaborate with another artist, or machine, to make artworks requires the deferral of consciousness. In this section I will expand upon the idea of collaboration already discussed in 4.3 Deferral. *Can your monkey do the dog?* (2007) is a collaborative project between Christopher Wool and Josh Smith and is

an interesting iteration of deferral. It is an artist's book documenting a process whereby each artist works over each other's image incorporating photography, painting and digital strategies. The project 'demonstrates the new freedom conferred by the computer... Their habitual roles are thoroughly compromised and the origins of the work become indecipherable' (Pontegnie 2012, p. 301).



Figure 55. Christopher Wool and Josh Smith, *Can your monkey do the dog?* 2008, detail

Digital imaging technology has increased both the speed and precision with which images can be produced. These functions have amplified the mimetic capacity of photographic space. *Can your monkey do the dog?* does exactly the opposite and is an example of how this technology may be used in more intuitive, less mimetic ways. The software itself, through powerful transformative functions, takes away any labour involved in visual manipulation. It is possible to give over to pre-set functions in the software in the same way

Wool and Smith give over to each other during the sending back and forth of images. Their collaboration, between artist and computer software, is a mode of deferral.

This is iterated in Series 4 of the practical research, the *Found Object Scans* (2017-2018). I have already discussed Wade Guyton's use of readily available machines and software as a 'dumb' approach to technology. Adobe Photoshop in particular is capable of engineering extreme detail and precision. Current editions include transformative tools enabling new outcomes such as High Dynamic Range Photography, whereby the depth of field in a photograph is expanded to simulate the range of the human eye. This is extreme mediation, far beyond the definition of this research. Given the capacity of software for illusion, it is counter to its programming to in fact utilise it for unconventional or intuitive purposes.

Once scanned and loaded into Adobe Photoshop, the time invested to generate the image below (see Figure 56) was very quick, a matter of minutes. Quickness retains a connection with the photocopier's signature gesture; to transform it further would delete this and descend into illusion for illusion's sake alone. There is a rawness to the image which reflects an immediacy during application.

Upon reflection, and considering this series of work as photocopies, before digital manipulation, one could question the reasoning behind undertaking this additional step in the process. As photocopies, the images of found objects are

already transformed and made distinct. The photocopy aesthetic removes a degree of detail and even degrades the image. The absence of colour further distances association with the original.³⁴ The addition of digital manipulation reinforces the intuition as method because it incorporates the difference offered by generic software immediately available. The act of photocopying became predictable due to its limited transformation of the subject. Digital manipulation, by comparison, enabled more extreme and faster transformation. Since the software replicates effects that could be achieved manually and has been written by another person, it felt like a surrogate collaboration.

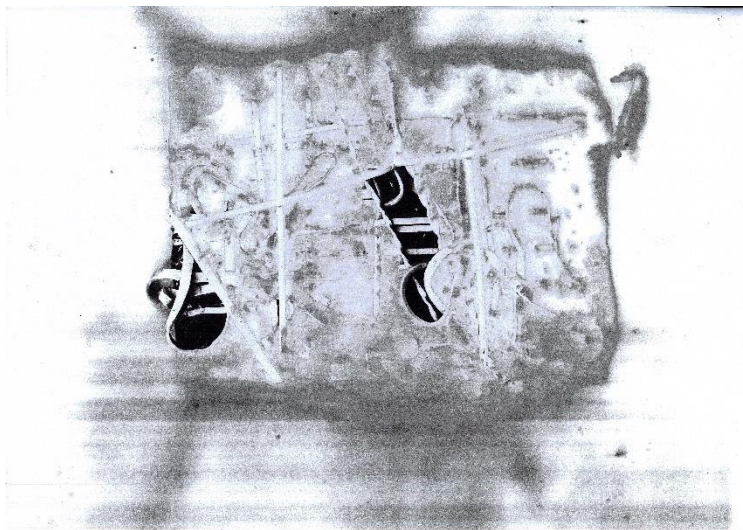


Figure 56. *Found Object Scan*, 2017, inkjet print on paper, 125 cm x 91.5 cm

³⁴ When inkjet prints are hung amongst paintings, the absence of colour creates a negative space or inter-zone.

Conclusion

Intuition as method is a constant influence across all the practical research. It assists in establishing connections between very different aesthetic manifestations. I always considered the artworks made from the photocopier collaborations to be a type of painting. The actual photocopier accidents, on A4 plain paper, I considered drawing, because these were more reductive in their design elements and immediate in process. These have all the same intuitive procedural ingredients as the un-mediated works. This difference is composite experience in the submission and the perceptual crossovers made possible via intuitive method.

Intuition is evident through residual processes such as gesture, composite parts and, most importantly, movement. These key Bergsonian principles also overlap to express duration. The artist's bodily presence, in a composite of very different forms, applies a lived action to the experience of time. This is achieved through degrees of mechanisation. A sensation of touch may be transferred through machines, as inconsistencies on a surface or even in the juxtaposition of dissimilar components.

Not thinking, not knowing and deferral all require resistance; the subtraction of something to create a space for action. These are essentially negative actions, because they involve the removal of things. An emptying out achieves a sensation closer to nothing. What remains is a space, to be filled. This mirrors

Bergson's articulation of the idea of nothing and its constant movement from empty to full. A product of intuition as method, as a multiplicity of movements, is the sensation of 'All'.

For intuition to be applicable as method, a degree of 'intuitive reason' is required. This is present as strategy. There is freedom in this limitation. It engineers a circumstance for action, without the restraint of pre-determined factors. 'Submission to the logic of a rule or instruction can operate as a device for not knowing, as a way of surrendering responsibility, absolving oneself of agency or control within a practice in order to be surprised'. (Cocker 2013, p. 129)

I was able to maintain a consistent production of work. This became a recording of temporal circumstance, instead of a measure of quality. Despite the persistence of intuition, and the changes it brought about, there is a sensation of repetition and looping. This and other philosophical components will be discussed in the next chapter under the umbrella of becoming.

Chapter Five: Becoming

Introduction

In this Chapter, I will relate important developments in the research to Bergson's principle of becoming. Like his other principles of movement, duration and intuition, becoming exists primarily as perception. It is matter projected in the mind as memory (Russell p. 759). Becoming is a symptom of duration in that lived experience, as freedom of action, and as *élan vital* is subject to unpredictable conditions and behaviours. There is constant random movement.

In reality there are no separate solid things, only an endless stream of becoming, in which nothing becomes and there is nothing that this nothing becomes. But becoming may be a movement up or a movement down: when it is a movement up it is called life, when it is a movement down it is what, as misapprehended by the intellect, is called matter. (Russell 1987, p. 758)

There are many ideological positions and practical experiments in this research which contribute to the philosophical growth of the project. Some of these, particularly in the practical research, occurred intuitively and hence required time to process. While the presence of difference is contradictory, it also provides source material for the discovery of relations in unlikely sources. The juxtaposition of difference, in order to convey the complication of Bergson's

principles has unfolded and evolved as a becoming. In this chapter I will outline these different ideological and practical developments.

A significant becoming in the practical research was a movement away from mediated processes, such as photocopying and digital image transformation, towards un-mediated real-time painting. I call this development 'the turn'. The exhibition of the mediated works in *The Same As It Never Was* in late 2015 initiated a reflection upon process and how this formulated content. In this chapter I explain why the turn occurred and detail its ontological characteristics and implications. Differences between mediated to un-mediated processes are discussed but it is also important to note the persistence of similarities. For example, both explore a mechanisation of gesture and both investigate something from nothing as conundrum and ontology. The turn has diversified the presence of Bergson's key principles in the practical research and is therefore better able to convey their states as a multiplicity.

Two interpretations of *The Myth of Sisyphus* provide important philosophical content to the practical research. These are; Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* (1955) and Emma Cocker's *Over and Over, Again and Again* (2011). In the former Camus uses the myth of Sisyphus to examine meaning and introduce Absurdism. I apply this to the practical research by substituting abstract painting for Sisyphus' rock to emphasise toil, failure and repetition. Importantly, I position this circumstance as a model for the production of

meaning through process. Cocker's article confirms the repositioning of failure as a source of affirmation and production.

Nothing is discussed as a mirror for human existence and hence ontology. This is transferred into impossibility as evidenced in Andy Warhol's *Shadows*. It is also considered in relation to Gerhard Richter's *Grey* paintings. Finally, the idea of abstract painting itself, as a continuing mode of practice and philosophical enquiry, is explored as a source of becoming.

5.1 The Turn

In his discussion on intuition in *Bergsonism* (1966 pp. 27-29), Deleuze outlines a method of becoming which involves a decisive point or 'turn' towards the discovery of differences in kind. This process is varied and even contradictory as one's perception of phenomena constantly moves and overlaps. There is no singular progression, just movement through composite experience. However there is an outcome: a virtual image or illusion.

First, it denotes the moment when the lines, setting out from an uncertain common point given in experience, diverge increasingly according to differences in kind. Then, it denotes another moment when these lines converge again to give us this time the virtual image or the distinct reason of the common point. Turn and return. (Deleuze 1966, p. 29)

To apply 'the turn' to a particular stage in the practical research, where there is change and movement in process, is appropriate. A turn is continuous, a period of transition without an endpoint. There is a cycle of repetition. This will be discussed later in this chapter. It is brought about by a response or reaction through difference and leads to the formation of a virtual image. The virtual image is the movement between nothing and something and vice versa; the transition of matter into memory.³⁵ It is the process of the recognition and unrecognition of illusion.³⁶

As a component of making, the turn is movement away from the use of machines to generate imagery back towards the artist, from mediated to un-mediated processes. However, this re-turns indirectly through method as the artist becomes the machine through the implementation of particular intuitive strategy (See Chapter 4: Intuition).

The turn highlights a key question about the use of mediated process; namely, why was this approach important? Firstly, it created a deferral of thinking, particularly in relation to image formulation, away from the artist onto a secondary device. Secondly, it mirrored Malevich's New Realism philosophy or the creation of something from nothing. Thirdly it provided a distinct and

³⁵ Bergson's matter and memory are a functioning dualism. To describe one as transitioning to another is an oversimplification of their relationship. They are not binaries. A transition is just one small part of their potential interrelation as movement.

³⁶ In the practical research, the virtual image is that which is perceived as movement but is not actual movement (See Chapter 2: Movement).

intuitive type of photocopier signature gesture (as a substitute for the human). Fourthly, it enabled a re-assessment of conventional art-making strategies, particularly those relating to an accident or glitch. Finally, it questioned conventional notions of authorship and inspired a reflection upon the nature of mechanisation.

The practical research demonstrates how most of these factors can move between both mediated and un-mediated processes. Dividing it into four separate series emphasises this movement. In reference to the turn, the un-mediated works are, quite simply, an extension of the rendering processes used in the first series, *The Same As It Never Was* (2015), without the photocopy images. As a further turn, the artist is substituted for the photocopier. More succinctly, it is a return to the conventional painting process. The need to render a photocopier image as painting (clear silicon, screen-print, poured rubber, inkjet print) was removed. This enhanced a sensation of immediacy and hence changed the perception of duration through direct experience.

Albert Oehlen's methodology is in a constant movement or turn, and this is reflected in the different processes he employs throughout his practice. These make statements about the idea of painting and its conventions. He creates paintings in series format. *Son of Dogshit* (1997) is a work from Oehlen's series called the 'Bionic Paintings' (1992-). It has both mediated and un-mediated processes in it. He has created digital images with the aid of 'simple graphic

programs' which are printed, enlarged, and applied to a substrate via screen-printing. These are then painted over with a brush (Bell, Carrion-Murayari & Gioni 2015, p. 13).

Oehlen's choice of graphics program, through its simplicity (it has a limited range of options for image transformation) induced a freedom to act, undaunted by limitless possibility and choice. This logic, to utilise rudimentary or out-dated technology, is alternative to conventional notions of technological progress. Typically, the newest, most advanced option is superior. It is capable of more. By utilising outdated and very rudimentary graphics software, Oehlen subverts this norm. Furthermore, the act of painting over the screen-printed graphic also 'messes up' the clean printed image. As Oehlen himself stated,

Normally the computer helps you to do something that you otherwise couldn't do. Computers open a window to the future. Here things are reversed. The painter corrects the pixels, and ultimately the computer image gives rise to a hand-painted picture (Bergson 2012, p. 33).

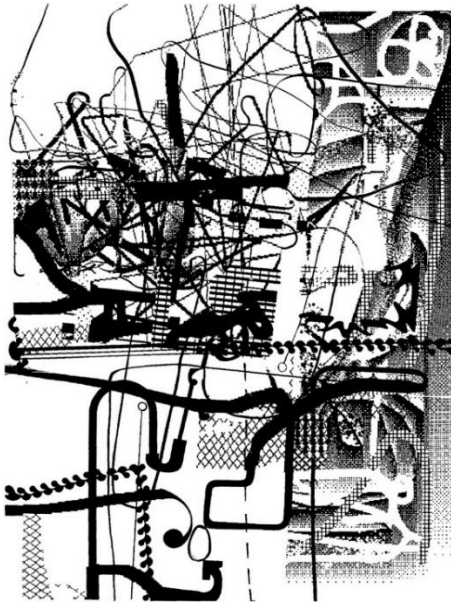


Figure 57. Albert Oehlen, *Son of Dogshit*, 1997, oil on canvas, 255 cm x 190 cm

A backward step technologically is actually a productive step conceptually and expressively. Oehlen's unconventional collage of digital imaging, screen-printing and hand painting is about the medium of paintings becoming, through expansion due to the incorporation of outsider processes. It is still painting, although expanded (Titmarsh, M, 2017, p. 63) and, importantly the immediacy of painting is retained.

5.12 Why the Turn?

I will elaborate a reason for the turn in the practical research as follows. *Down to Earth*, 2015, is an enlargement of two frames from another work, *Developer malfunction photocopied 81 times enlarged at 200% projected at intervals of 0.2*

of a second (2015).³⁷ The two frames are scans of a small section from an original photocopy image which was the result of a malfunction due to developer exhaustion (see Figure 21). To preserve an attachment with this procedure, I aspired for some time to include a photocopy in the final exhibition. However, I could not because the pieces lacked aura alongside other works.³⁸ The inclusion of these could destabilise the entire body. Instead, I was comfortable with scanned, enlarged images, inkjet printed onto white sheets of paper. Stock similar to plain photocopy paper was selected. Photocopy enlargements were trialled but the presence of additional distortion, due to this process, muffled and distracted from the original image. The rendering of the photocopy drawings as inkjet prints enabled a clarity and a physicality or thickness consistent with other pieces; an equivalence of visual weight.



Figure 58. *Down to earth*, 2015, inkjet print on matte photo paper 91cm x 142.5 cm x 2 panels

³⁷ Presented as a stop-motion animation.

³⁸ See Walter Benjamin's notion of aura in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 2010, Prism Key Press, pp. 17-20.

There were two separate image-generation procedures: the original photocopy malfunction and the re-presentation of it as finished art. The subject had moved away from its source towards a presentation of different types of virtual movement. The photocopy images were vehicles to achieve this. The purity and surprise of the initial happening, through interaction with the photocopier was secondary. The artist had become spectator, or rather the movement between these two states of consciousness had become fixed. The method was over-determined, or the degree of predetermination outweighed the reason the works became in the first place; the photocopier accident.

To refer to this development as a problem is not negative, for the stating and creating of problems enables change through movement. The turn was required because the inclusion of machines to create images became no longer necessary. These were substituted for unconventional mark-making devices such as brooms and squeegees, a simpler form of mechanisation. I no longer needed a secondary device to defer, avoid or initiate particular types of thinking. Instead, I could attempt to not think independently. Importantly, through performative gesture, the turn restored a sensation of immediacy.

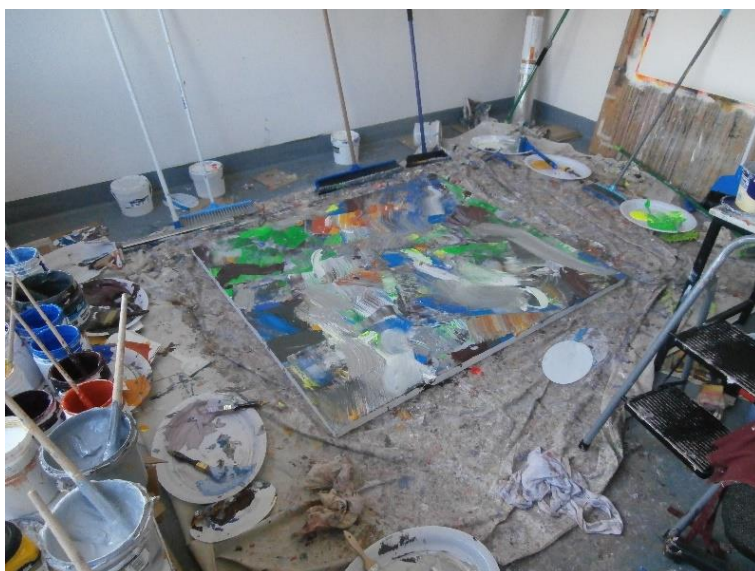


Figure 59. Studio view, un-mediated painting, work in progress, 2016

5.2 The Myth of Sisyphus

I will discuss two essays which use the myth of Sisyphus as a metaphor to illustrate ontological issues. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* (1955) by Albert Camus and 'Over and Over, Again and Again' (2011) by Emma Cocker. Both provide an important philosophical framework (in addition to Bergson) especially for the establishment of a position in relation to meaning, its manufacture and whether it may in fact exist at all.

To apply the Absurdist position is to identify meaning where there is nothing (See Chapter 1). This is consistent with abstract painting because, at its genesis, it has no mimetic subject matter. A subject is created or actualised during production. Camus' Sisyphus locates meaning through a pause between toil and repetition. This allows for lucid thought, a space for reflection, and an awareness

of predicament which facilitates happiness. For a short period, Sisyphus' mind is free to wander as he watches the rock roll back down the hill.

...all reflection strives to be mindful of meaning, to recollect and recover the sources of significance... (Sandywell 2011, p. 405)

There is significance in the toil of making. The *Myth of Sisyphus* is a process, and the generation of meaning (through a recognition that life is absurd and there is no truth) is a becoming.

The Sisyphean rock of this project is abstract painting and its many permutations. It has risk, especially as a repetition of itself. In this project there is a striving to continue and create difference. Experimentation with numerous processes to make expanded abstract painting has added distinct technical layers. These form composite experience.

In the case of the photocopier drawings (see Series 1 of the practical research) there was considerable toil in re-photocopying the initial two accidents. This was maintained over long periods. I had no pre-conceived image in mind and kept photocopying until an image evolved. To produce images in this way was liberating. Unique properties in each drawing influenced decisions about how these were to be developed further into expanded abstract paintings. In *The Same As It Never Was* (2015) this is transferred into composite experience; these are numerous permutations exploring movement.



Figure 60. *All and Nothing*, 2015, vinyl ink on marine ply, 47 cm x 65.5 cm x 9 panels and *Pouring*, 2015, polyurethane rubber on painted timber support, 241 cm x 383 cm

The degree to which each photocopier drawing was re-developed (or re-presented) was different for each work. In *Composite Matter* (2015) (see Figure 61) I applied pictorial strategy to create an illusion of space. This is achieved through proportion; that is, larger shapes protrude and small shapes recede. These are moments of lucidity within the Sisyphean cycle. However, the desire to picture an image, to transform it in some way to interact with a design convention, shifts the balance of power back away from the photocopier to the artist. In *Composite Matter* (2015), the picturing of the photocopier drawings adds a further layer of determinism. A return to the psychology of picturing space is another additional cycle of repetition. As a sequence of decisions and consequences, there is a growth of changing experience. *Composite Matter* also pictures its own becoming.



Figure 61. *Composite Matter*, 2015, mixed media on marine plywood, 120cm x 80 cm

5.3 Preferring to Fail: Looping

In her article 'Over and Over, Again and Again' (2011), Emma Cocker cites a number of examples of artistic practice which act out the Sisyphean condition to create positive outcomes. Curiously one such outcome is preferring to fail. This position was expanded in detail with Iddo Landau's *The Paradox of the End* (1995) (see Chapter 1.7, p. 37). What is Sisyphus to do if he succeeds? Landau suggests that, rather than face a loss of purpose he would simply restart the cycle by pushing the boulder back down the hill.

'Preferring to fail' is cited by Cocker in the performative works of Bas Jan Ader,³⁹ Vlatka Horvat⁴⁰ and Francis Alys. The latter artist's work explicitly re-enacts

³⁹ See for example *Fall 1*, 1970, and other proceeding works where Ader concocts performances in which he is subject to falling off a chair or tree branch.

⁴⁰ See for example *This Here and That There*, 2007, an eight-hour performance in which Horvat attempts to arrange a number of plastic chairs for a hypothetical purpose. The aim is doomed to fail as it takes place in a shallow lake. The chairs cannot be fixed as they continuously float away.

Sisyphean failure. For example, in *Paradox of Praxis 1 (Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing)*, 1997, Alys pushes a block of ice around Mexico City for nine hours until it melts while in *Caracoles* 1999, a film documents a boy kicking an empty bottle up a hill, only to have it roll back down again repeatedly. Cocker identifies a political dimension to Alys' works that is present in the inbuilt failure mechanism within the performance. It is a critique on government systems which emphasise productivity and progress. 'Sisyphean failure (and repetition) could then be reclassified as a playful or ludic strategy that disrupts normative expectations and values by refusing their rules in favour of another logic'. A further layer is to expose the flawed aim of modernism and its 'promise of progression' (Cocker 2011, pp. 283-285). In this way the Sisyphean condition may offer resistance.



Figure 62. Francis Alys, *Paradox of Praxis 1 (Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing)*, 1997, photographic documentation of an action, Mexico City, video, 5-minute loop

In the practical research this is enacted during the making of un-mediated paintings. It is compounded by the difficulty of determining when a painting is complete. Like Alys' block of ice, there are givens in the mechanism - the ice will always melt. However, these are subject to contextual influence; namely, the performative actions of the artist and the pushing around of paint. In contrast to *Alys' Paradox of Praxis 1* where the block of ice melts and there is no conclusive object, this research is about the production of objects; there is always something from nothing. Each painting session, with its real-time happenings, has a particular circumstance and offers a different becoming.

The Composite Paintings (2017-2018) were made in separate sessions. They were not re-worked at a later time. There were six substrates or canvases in total, ranging in size. I completed eight sets of six. A pictorial summary of one of these sets is shown below.



Figure 63. Studio 2017, colours were pre-mixed

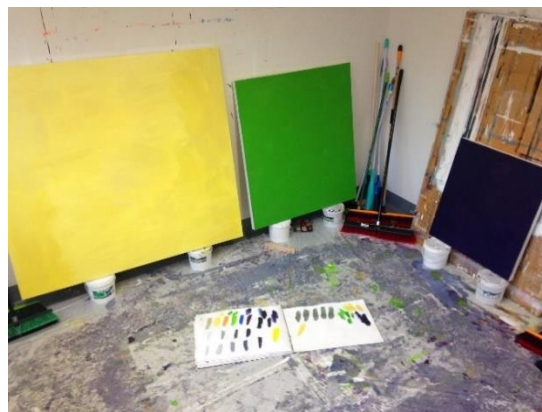


Figure 64. Studio 2017, a ground was applied



Figure 65. Studio 2017, impasto under-painting



Figure 66. Studio 2017, Sweeping, blurring and wiping

The presence of failure is not as distinct as with Alys' melting ice block.

Ultimately the production of something is inevitable; however, the inclusion of gestures such as sweeping, blurring and wiping are conventionally associated with failure; the cleaning up of a mess. In this method, these actions are productive as the mess is not removed or disposed of but instead transformed. I could continue to sweep and blur until there is only a permutation of grey but I try to maintain a degree of immediacy. Curiously if this was ever to eventuate, the presence of grey would bring the process closer to Alys' nothing as the ice melted.

5.4 Failure

Wade Guyton's intuitive approach to technology through deferral invites failure. This is evident as paper jams and ink puddles that sometimes occur at random but are often the result of direct interference by Guyton himself. I have already discussed his intervention of pulling the canvas as it is fed through an ink jet

printer to create tears and ruptures. Guyton also re-feeds the same canvas through again and may also fold it in two; it is a contrived failure. (Rothkopf 2013, p. 24)

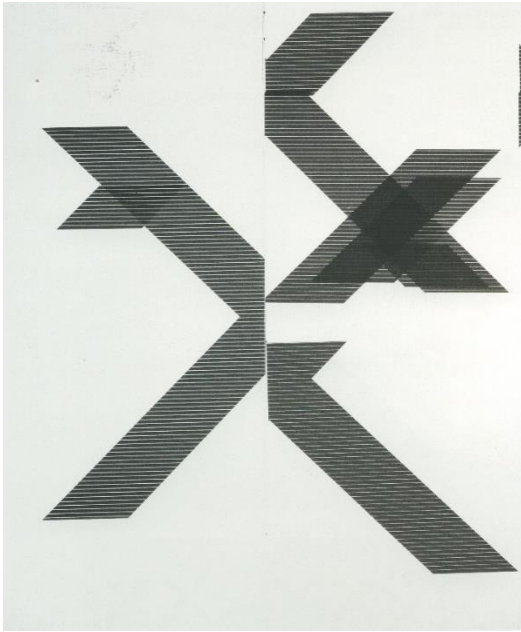


Figure 67. Wade Guyton, *Untitled*, 2007, inkjet on linen, 213.4 cm x 175 cm

Some of these interventions are apparent in *Untitled* (2007). The canvas has been printed in halves and has been re-fed through the printer. Inconsistencies, which appear as horizontal stripes, may also be the result of print head misalignment. Guyton originally selected the letter 'X' from Microsoft Word as both a mark of a signature and also an acknowledgement of an error.⁴¹ These were also interpreted by others as a cancellation of modernism. Dissatisfied with

⁴¹ Exactly who's signature is it? Not Guyton's as he is not the author. If the 'X' is to be considered in this way, then traditional notions of authorship are expanded. The Microsoft Word 'X' becomes Guyton's as it is subject to his technological interferences. It is no longer the same. Guyton achieves a different type of authorship and ownership through transformation.

this association, Guyton began using the letter 'U' instead. (Rothkopf 2013, p. 204)

Guyton's failure is productive. It defers consciousness over to a secondary source, computer software and an ink jet printer, whose aesthetic characteristics are preserved. There is a technical accessibility: almost anyone could do it; that is, use basic computer software and inkjet printers to make art.

Our technological tools are designed to produce sameness and in Guyton's hands they almost do. It is this 'almost' that gives the work its power. There is the sense of trying to get something right and repeatedly failing, before finding in that failure both a formal and semantic possibility, a sense of how machines, humans, and images interact today. (Rothkopf 2013, p. 36)

In the practical research there is a similar interference with standard or programmed functions to achieve unexpected results. This is most apparent through the use of the photocopier as a mediated process. However this is also transferred, through intuitive strategy, into un-mediated processes, to consider a real-time painting technique, as a type of human/mechanical interference, but not a regression. A change of consciousness makes it possible to continue with painting where once it felt impossible.

Adi Eyal repositioned the idea of Duration within a historical context, particularly as a sensation of delay. This idea adds a further nuance to failure and Bergson's

principles of Duration and Intuition. In relation to perception, there is only the past, no present or future (as soon as one conceives the present it is already past), therefore 'every thought is historical.' Eyal stated '...duration could be thought of in terms of delay, hindrance, setback, foreclosure, blockage or deferment'. Hence, through a 'curve' in experience she associates the principle of Duration with the act of the mistake. Through this act, and the principle of Intuition the mistake becomes generative (2013, p.53-56).

In Series 3, the *Composite Paintings* (2017-2018), each session also included three small canvas panels. These were painted at the same time as the others (six in total). However, due to their small scale there is a greater possibility for experimentation. They could easily be mistaken for failures as they are sometimes pressed directly into the wet paint surface of larger panels. An image is created blind. The resulting painterly blob (see below) is reminiscent of the photocopier's own signature gesture. It demonstrates the relativity of failure: that is, in this context there is no ultimate failure.



Figure 68. *Composite work canvas panel*, 2017, 30.5 cm x 40.6 cm

Sometimes the canvas panels take on a landscape association, through the presence of a horizon. A picture space is implied because it is loosely divided into sky and ground. This is inherent in the proportion of the panel. When horizontal it is already landscape format. Larger canvas substrates are made in different, square proportions in order to subvert this convention.



Figure 69. *Composite work canvas panel*, 2017, 30.5 cm x 40.6 cm



Figure 70. *Composite work canvas panel*, 2017, 30.5 cm x 40.6 cm

In *Composite work canvas panel* (2017) (Figure 70 above), there are no additional brush marks made after the panel has been pressed into another. There is an

attempt to avoid a horizon, but one may still project a landscape orientation via aerial perspective. The need to add likeness through familiarity becomes automatic and habit forming. Its persistence as pareidolia is Sisyphean.

The application of the canvas panels changed as the *Composite Works* (2017-2018) progressed. They began as separate components. These were sometimes placed onto the surface of larger panels once dry, as an afterthought to facilitate interior exterior movement. However, later in the construction of this series, they were placed directly onto the surface during the making, while the paint was still wet. These could then be swept over or moved around to manipulate the rhythm of each gesture (see Figure 71, below).



Figure 71. *Composite Painting*, 2017-2018, mixed media on canvas, 120 cm x 109 cm

5.5 Becoming Nothing

The exploration of the idea of nothing in examples of art practice is subject to movement (see Chapter 2), as by definition it cannot be rendered without transitioning into something. This ideological movement reflects upon phenomena and things as actually there or not. The contemplation of nothing in this way is an ontology. It mirrors the paradox of existence; that is, the desire to assign meaning where there is nothing outside of ourselves. The investigation of nothing, both as ideation and its rendering as painting has its own philosophical becoming.

In 2015 I pursued the photocopier drawings because in them I perceived infinite space. Quite by accident, the photocopy resembled a diagram of a black hole.

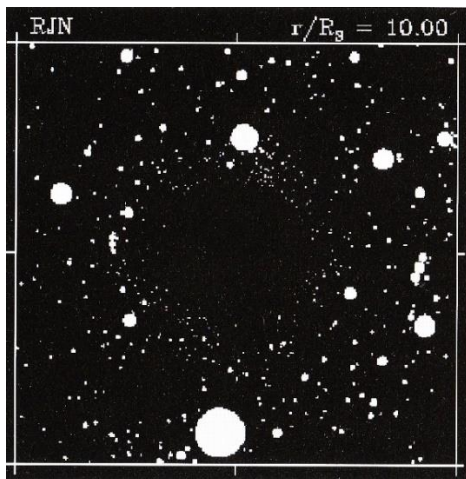


Figure 72. Black Hole from a distance of 42.0km



Figure 73. *All and Nothing* 2015, vinyl ink on marine ply, 47 cm x 65.5 cm, detail

The fact that I perceived such a grand image in a worthless photocopy bought about a reflection on recognition and how one's own experience is transferred or projected into images. Is anything actually there? This project articulates this circumstance through Expanded Abstract Painting. In *The Same As It Never Was*, it is a shifting looping movement of nothing into something.

The recognition of the image of infinity, in a photocopy is pursued in more detail in *All and Nothing* (2015). In Chapter 3.31 this work is discussed in the context of duration, particularly in relation to movement. There is further content in this work which evidences the recognition of infinity as an ontology because it inspired many philosophical questions. I will expand this work further as follows.

In *All and Nothing* (2015) the point of dissolution is the centre panel. Images on the remaining four panels are different in appearance. Not only do they

resemble the diagram of a black hole (see Figure 72), but they are also continuous; that is, I could keep enlarging this image at 600% and the photocopier would keep producing. Infinity is reflected in the continuousness of production. The series could continue indefinitely, but I decided to present nine panels, an odd number and therefore containing a centre to emphasise this point of dissolution.



Figure 73. *All and Nothing* 2015, vinyl ink on marine ply, 47 cm x 65.5 cm, detail

The fact that these images appeared initially as a drum blade malfunction and are explored in this way demonstrates specific types of becoming through association. This is in the becoming of an image and its perception alongside the processes undertaken by the artist. The images are still the consequence of a performed act, albeit photocopying and screen-printing. They retain a gesture similar to a photocopy snap shot. As a series they are also a collection of moments.

5.51 Nothing as Impossibility

Francis McKee, in his essay 'From Zero to Nothing in No Time', introduces a 'nothing paradox' as impossibility. This is a consequence of movement when articulating the idea of nothing.

Nothing is impossible. Or, put another way, 'nothing' is a concept so fraught with paradox and contradictions that it defeats definition. The flipside of nothing is something and each attempt to consider the idea of nothing reveals another 'thing' or entity – no matter how mundane, microscopic or imperceptible. (Gussin and Carpenter 2001, p. 16)

Acknowledging this conundrum McKee, defers to artistic expression instead and does not dwell upon its inherent contradictions. He cites Warhol's *Shadows* (1978-9) (see Figure 74.) as an embodiment of the 'something from nothing' paradox. 'There is almost nothing on them. Yet they appear to be pictures of something and as full of imagery as any of Andy's other paintings' (Schnabel 1989, p. 4).



Figure 74. Andy Warhol, *Shadows*, 1978-79, acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas, detail

Can this mystery be solved, if one considers the process by which the images for the paintings were conceived? There is some conjecture as to how they were actually made, but one thing is certain: they are renderings of photographs of shadows. A shadow of 'what' is beside the point. The decision to photograph a shadow isolated from any object or light source adds layers to the work. A shadow is created by an absence of light, it embodies emptiness, but it is still something that can be perceived. The exploration and creation of a sensation of nothingness in the *Shadows* is complex. In this way Warhol renders impossibility.

This translates into the practical research in a number of ways. Firstly, to photocopy is to create a shadow, especially in black and white. The fact that the images are not photographs of something, but are instead the product of technological malfunction, amplifies their impossibility. They came from nothing (a black sheet of paper under the hood) out of nothing (an arcane Toshiba 1650

black and white photocopier) and were never really anything to begin with - unlike Warhol's *Shadows* which did originate from something. The degree of nothing as source material is higher.



Figure 75. *Peek-a-boo*, 2015, mixed media on marine plywood, 90 cm x 63.5 cm x 2 panels

In *Peek-a-boo* (2015), a section of the image resulting from the photocopier drum blade malfunction is enlarged and applied to a diptych format. On the left, is the enlargement and on the right is an enlargement of the enlargement. In effect, the image on the right panel is a shadow of part of the left. It has even been manipulated in Photoshop to distort its shape, as a shadow would change due to light conditions. As the viewer moves from left to right in the presence of this work its image dissolves into the white ground. Like the rendering of the idea of nothing, it defies identification and its existence is movement between states of recognition.

5.53 Grey Nothing

In a series titled *Grey Paintings*, Gerhard Richter attempted to express the idea of nothing.

Grey. It makes no statement whatever; it evokes neither feelings nor associations; it is really neither visible or invisible. Its inconspicuousness gives it the capacity to mediate, to make visible, in a positively illusionistic way, like a photograph. It has the capacity that no other colour has, to make 'nothing' visible. (Richter 1995, p. 82)

Richter painted his first *Gray Paintings* in 1972 (Storr 2002, p. 315). He had of course painted many paintings in only the colour grey previously, but this date marks the production of 'abstract' paintings very specifically about 'Grey' and the application of grey paint. He associated grey with absence, being in his opinion close to nothing via 'neither/nor'. This ambiguity, present in the in-betweenness or neutrality of grey, is indicative (for Richter) of the nothing paradox. This middle ground, as implied by grey as a colour, is also a strategy whereby Richter attempts to avoid associations with externalised reality. He simply does not wish to differentiate between reality and illusion. He prefers the in-between.⁴²

(Richter 1995, p. 70)

⁴² In addition to the colour grey as a referent for doubt Richter also refers to 'grey areas' in an image. These are the spaces in between recognisable subjects, the neutral zones. (Storr, R, 2002, p.55)

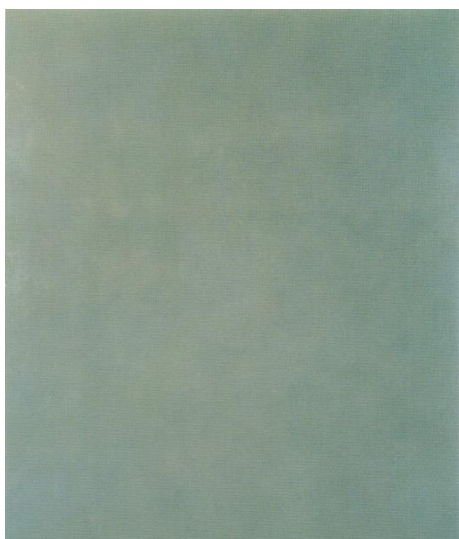


Figure 76. Gerhard Richter, *Grey* (397), 1976, Oil on canvas, 200 cm x 170 cm

Richter cites abstract painting as a vehicle for the manifestation of nothing (Richter 1995, p. 100). Or, more appropriately, I should state that Richter believes his *Grey Painting's* to be effective in communicating an experience or sensation which may be associated with the nothing paradox.

It is not possible to visualize Nothing. One way to gain some idea of that terrible state is through the impossibility of visualizing anything before, after or alongside the universe. Now, since we very much want this visualization, but know it only as one we can never have, it is an impossibility that we experience, existentially, as an absolute limit. (Richter 1995, p. 123)

In the practical research, the presence of grey is a by-product of the mixing of paint during making; that is, at any one time, colours may be blended together to achieve a different type of grey. At the conclusion of a painting session, unused paint is either returned to its original pot (if the colour is still pure) or added to

an overflow and mixed in with other leftovers to make a grey for the next painting. In theory, if paint is blended to its extreme, a completed painting could display only variations of grey.⁴³ Prior to beginning a painting, four different tones of grey are prepared. These provide an in-between or neutral zone and deliver an aesthetic 'resting place'.

Grey appeared because it was there, in the studios and spaces in which the un-mediated paintings were made. The walls were grey, the doors were grey, and the stairs were grey. When deciding how to begin, it was appropriate to utilise this environmental factor as influence. It provided a materialistic foundation for the development of colour schemes, a thinking before the non-thinking act of making the paintings. With this association in mind, grey is not nothing but is instead a reflection of the environment in which part of the practical research was made.



Figure 77. *Grey Floor Painting*, 2017, mixed media on mylar, 260 cm x 240 cm

⁴³ A mark of failure is the appearance of a muddy grey mess; a result of overworking and overthinking. The recycling of grey paint in this way is both economical and productive.

Conclusion

Becoming requires a change or movement in consciousness and a perceptual transformation. The turn to un-mediated process and the making of the *Untitled No Idea* (2016-2017) series achieved a heightened sensation of immediacy, through direct paint application in real time. The body gestures of the artist remain frozen in the surface of the paint. The development of a subject is a consequence of movement and this, in turn, is present as a composite of gestures. In short, through transition and change, the un-mediated works added a lived experience of time, a change of duration in addition to the mediated works.

A process orientated approach allows for the growth of meaning through intuitive method. It is not pre-determined but arises out of the repetitive application of doing. Meaning generated in this way and grounded in process has a literalness because it has developed out of tangible, felt events. One can recollect ones actions with a degree of certainty. In short, process-generated meaning has a significance because there is a thickness (Titmarsh 2017, p. 11) in the gestures in the painting. A sequence of events can be discerned as layers like the excavation of an archaeological dig.

In this chapter I discussed the presence of infinity through the comparison of an image of a black hole and a photocopy drawing. What is less obvious is the persistence of infinity or a sensation of endlessness in the un-mediated

paintings. The photocopier gestures are replaced with real-time paint marks, sweeps and wipes, and these are positioned inside the picture frame as composition. There is a picture because there is space and the space has motion, a dynamic motion across and into the surface. It has a spiralling sensation, that of a vortex or black hole. Despite the differences in all the components of the practical research there are critical similarities.

This research has been subject to a degree of unpredictability, particularly in the processes employed to make paintings. The method of its progression has been a state of becoming as there has been regular non-linear movement and change; that is, its trajectory has unfolded as a layering of different making experiences. It demonstrates becoming is a product of intuitive method. Its zenith is a turn away from mediated processes towards un-mediated processes. This was a risk as these are very different, even contradictory approaches. However, in the submission, these differences in process convey and explore the multiplicity of movement as duration. The practical research has grown in unexpected directions. These reflect Bergson's principles and assist in the framing of the practical research.

There is also an ontological becoming. The method, with its emphasis on process, creates a space in perception due to the absence of representational subject matter. This is a space for abstract painting. It is an open site for the projection of ideas and associations: 'any open work does not proclaim the death of form;

rather it proposes a new, more flexible version of its form as a field of possibilities' (Eco 1989, p. 102). These reflect changes in the method and are also subject to movement. However, there are consistent philosophical ideas, in addition to Bergson, which have persisted through the research. Albert Camus' notion of Absurdism and its questioning of the human inclination to assign meaning has transpired as a looping condition with Sisyphean associations. Emma Cocker makes a claim, using certain examples of art practice, for an affirmative reading of the Sisyphean myth.

The space of abstract painting in the first series of practical research, and in Andy Warhol's *Shadows*, led to an investigation of the idea of nothing, as ontology and as paradox. Its persistence as a source of enquiry for artistic practice is indicative of a condition in which an idea eludes representation to such an extreme as to question whether it exists at all. This predicament mirrors ontological life experience.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction

I have discussed Bergson's principles of movement, duration, intuition and becoming in relation to Expanded Abstract Painting and the idea of nothing has provided an underlying theme. In this concluding chapter, I will relate Bergson's principles to the idea of nothing. This mirrors ontological questions concerning the perception of things; that is, the process of understanding what is really there in actuality. In the practical research, the idea and perception of nothing as ontology is a key finding. Other findings of the practical research demonstrate that the idea of impossibility is a product of the nothing paradox. It is rendered in painting as movement and is also discussed as a source of anxiety.

Anxiety is present in the perception of space as movement. For instance, in the un-mediated paintings uncertainty about where certain gestures sit spatially means that they oscillate between depth and flatness. In the mediated works, there is both movement and stillness as determined by the viewer's proximity to the work or by a degree of animation. The presentation of imagery as potentially still and moving is intended to cause reflection upon movement as illusion and hence a doubting of empirical sense data. A sensation of doubt presupposes anxiety.

The turn from mediated to un-mediated processes was a point of resistance, a decision to make procedural adjustments. This turn deleted an additional layer of conscious representation which had become habitual. By avoiding a mannered presentation of imagery, it changed and diversified the experience of duration, and amplified life presence as *élan vital*, through direct mark-making and gesture. However the turn is a component in a larger procedural movement because there was a further turn back towards mediated process during series 4 of the practical research, the *Found Object Scans* (2017-2018). This is indicative of a looping which underpins the entire project.

Bergson's notion of the composite (as matter) is clarified and duration re-enforced as being evident in a multiplicity. The strategy of collaboration is also articulated as a dualism and the paradigm of painting itself is contextualized as becoming. Future directions for research include extending the range of collaboration and the aesthetic investigation of disappearance through casting in clear resin.

This project began with a very particular methodology: to create imagery from nothing in a studio environment without the importation of external source material. This method is not new, and for the purposes of this project I refer to Malevich's New Realism to establish a starting point. This enquiry into the something-from-nothing process transferred into a research aim: how can the idea of nothing be expressed in Expanded Abstract Painting as movement? The

presence of nothing as process has also transferred over to perception as ideation and visualisation in images. This has resulted in findings concerning this aim and the incorporation of Bergson's other key principles of duration, intuition and becoming. These have assisted in its clarification and added a philosophical grounding.

A large-scale submission was appropriate to allow the viewer to experience the differences (and similarities) between key stages of the practical research. The entire submission creates a composite of procedure, both mediated and un-mediated, under one methodology. It reveals a Sisyphean looping of practice, where an artist is both working with and against established modes of visual expression. For the viewer this demonstrates a movement, which is at times divergent and in-determinant, like that in Bergson's *Creative Evolution*. This reflects upon our perception of time as Duration. It is a detailed un-packing of art-making procedures as ontological enquiry.

In considering the hang of work in the submission this project presented a particular difficulty. Due to the scale and diversity of work exactly how should its selection and placement be approached? Given the importance of intuitive method should it be predetermined?

Having the entire gallery allowed for the inclusion of *All and Nothing*, 2015 (See image 6) at the centre of the submission. The positioning of this work near the animation set up a thinking about being in time and how illusions of movement

are created and essentially deconstructed (as one chooses to move about in the space). Movement is then carried further into body gesture, frozen as marks in paint. This transition is also detailed as 'the turn' from mediated to un-mediated processes.

The idea of nothing has been discussed as cognitive process, a sequence of transitory thoughts or ideological movement between something and nothing. In the practical research it has also been explored as perceptual movement through the recognition of something from nothing; for example the illusion of space and depth or likeness through projected association, such as a black hole or a landscape orientation. The creation of marks in paint or equivalent is also a trace of a gesture as actual movement; a further nuance of something from nothing. The gestural trace is autonomous and does not mimic external phenomena. It is pure creation: something from nothing.

Duration exists as perception, a product of Bergson's memory and matter dualism. It is not illusion like animation because it is in matter (as discussed in Bergson's example of the dissolving cube of sugar). It exists only in the past tense as memory. Duration is also experience and hence associated with action and process as in the idea of nothing. It is a means of being through the understanding and perceiving of temporal phenomena.

Intuition is a method for facilitating transformation, both as movement and as living in duration. As process, it is the mechanism which allows for nothing and

something to exist as a dualism. Through the intuition, phenomena usually considered external to a visual or experiential system can be absorbed into it. This creates composite experience and adds substance to duration. This is evident in the palettes, canvas boards, ink-jet prints, an animation, a floor painting, screen-prints, and photocopied imagery in the submission. If external phenomena can be absorbed into the interior workings of an image in painting, it then it is feasible to expand its syntax into architectural and phenomenological space. This is apparent, in different methods, in the work of Katharina Grosse and Jacqueline Humphries. There are no pictorial boundaries.

Finally, the investigation of nothing, both as ideation and process, has left a history of making and thinking that has materialised as ontological circumstance. The growth and unexpected trajectory of this theme throughout the project has formed a becoming.

A key finding, through the evolution of the practical research has been the mirroring of something from nothing as ontology. This method has been pursued because, after all of Bergson's articulations and insights, I can state only one thing with a degree of certainty and that is that I performed this specific act at this time and place and in this way. I have a recording, in painting, as a gestural trace, mediated or not, of duration as a life experience: that gesture is there and I made it as a matter of fact. It is not complicated by pre-determined narrative or metaphorical association. Its meaning is in its method.

The practical research is a recording of an existence. The incorporation of nothing into method creates an open space for literal connection, with the artist's own physical presence. The discussion about the idea of nothing in the exegesis and its exploration in the practical research is the mechanism for the framing of Expanded Abstract Painting within Bergson's principles.

Additional to the ontology of nothing is its presence as movement. Nothing, is 'no thing', and hence it cannot be rendered as image or language. As soon as it is conceived it becomes something. As a cognitive process manifesting nothing presents a predicament in thinking as movement. This is characterised by a Sisyphean looping of thoughts.

There are manifestations of nothing, such as emptiness, absence and voids, but these are still ultimately something. Hence, to attempt to render nothing as image is an impossibility. Significantly, however, it can be conveyed as movement.

Recognition (of something) in painting facilitates a movement from nothing to something. This is discussed in Chapter 2 and is evident as interior exterior movement. In the practical research, a shift in consciousness is required to perceive elements conventionally outside the realm of painting as part of its inside. In *Grey Floor Painting* 2016 (see Figure 77) incidental gestures made during the act of painting remain in the margin. These can be perceived as they are (for instance footprints and blobs of paint left by a broom), or they can be

absorbed into the syntax of the painting like any other gesture. This perceptual movement, from something to nothing is a non-representational rendering of impossibility. This is a finding of the practical research.

There is anxiety as a feeling of uncertainty and tension. This is a consequence of perceptual and actual movement expressed through layers of gesture. It is particularly evident in the un-mediated paintings. Paint is applied quickly and forcefully. Direction creates dynamic movement. Contrasting colours add activity. The inclusion of fluorescent pigments implies toxicity. These are noisy unsettling works.

Oscillating movement creates a spatial tension between foreground and background. At first glance a colour sits neatly behind others or implies a shallow depth as in-between space. Its properties then shift, and what was once receding is now protruding. This to-ing and fro-ing creates an ambiguity and a further layer of anxiety.⁴⁴ In *Untitled (No Idea) No.2*, below, layers of blue are applied, wiped and blurred. This action of turning the paint over creates the spatial tension. What appears to be near also becomes far away.

⁴⁴ This is distinct to Hans Hoffman's 'push pull' spatial movement as it is the same colour.



Figure 78. *Untitled (No Idea) No.2*, 2016, mixed media on 300gsm university cartridge, 122 cm x 86 cm

For Camus the presence of lucidity, when Sisyphus watches the rock roll back down the hill, provides a moment of resistance. This is transferred into life, particularly as a response to rationalism. Through lucidity, an acceptance of the impossible and the irrational overcomes despair (Camus, A, 1955, p.42)

Absurdism does not strive for absolute truth and its searching finds meaning in meaninglessness.

The point of resistance is the turn from mediated to un-mediated processes. It is a turn away from habit because the rendering of the photocopy drawings via transfer techniques like printmaking had become familiar and mannered. A change of habit enabled greater immediacy and risk and a renewed sense of freedom. As Michael Foley states in his book *Life Lessons From Bergson*, 'every now and then we reject habit, conditioning, the temptation of practicality and

the pressure of convention, to make decisions that are all the more compelling for seeming to defy reason' (2013, p. 32).

The desire to resist is also a product of anxiety created by a dissatisfaction with familiarity and predictability. In the submission resistance is responsible for the variety of different techniques; some of these are painting, screen-printing, animation, and inkjet prints. It is important to note that the turn away from mediated processes looped back again with the *Found Object Scans* (2017-2018) as the final series of practical research. However these are presented as inkjet prints; there is no need to transform the images further as in *The Same As It Never Was* (2015).

The presence of movement, in all its forms in the practical research challenges certainty, especially in relation to empirical sense data. The fact that a still thing appears to move initiates a doubting of one's perception of phenomena. What is really there? Nothing or something? It is the ontological question and, as distinct from the impossibility of rendering nothing, is a consistent subject in the practical research. It mirrors life experience.

Bergson provides 'an alternative to the qualitative mania of statistical analysis and rational thinking'. New technology such as artificial intelligence cannot replicate his principles of duration and intuition. These are distinct human characteristics (Guerlac 2006, pp. 197-8). The contrasting mediums within the practical research, juxtaposed in the submission, are the product of an in-

determination created by intuitive method. These differences and their similarities are indicative as a multiplicity of life experience. The presence of the artist is expressed in different degrees across mediated and un-mediated processes.

The juxtaposition of mediated and unmediated processes adds currency, because it incorporates imaging technology only recently made available. There is a mix of new and old mediums. Inkjet prints and paintings are different and similar: different in terms of surface and substrate, but similar in the application of New Realist something from nothing intuitive method. The process does determine the outcome.

A qualitative multiplicity like this is more than just a collection of different ingredients. The critical factors are the aesthetic sensibilities of the artist. In this case these transfer a life quality as feeling, even through computer software. There is a particular aesthetic to the imagery in the *Found Object Scans* (2017-2018) which aligns it with the un-mediated paintings. It is similar in its stylisation (the scale of shapes in proportion to the substrate is similar) and immediacy. These characteristics as layers are complicated and moving. This multiplicity is lived experience as duration.

I reiterate the presence of dualism in this project. Such an acknowledgement is itself a conclusion. Bergson's movement transfers as dualistic movement. It is an ontology because it is to accept a condition of being and of being subject to

temporal experience. The notion of dualism is indeterminate because there is no binary opposition through difference. Instead there is flux and change.

This is evident in the incorporation of secondary imaging devices, whether it be a photocopier or broom. The interaction between myself as the artist and the in kind differences of these devices is a dualistic movement. There is no power struggle for control between artist and machine, but rather a recognition of innate characteristics as composite experience. A giving over to another source, similar to collaborating with another person, liberates oneself from habit. It make the impossible possible again; a small moment of lucidity before the whole sequence loops in on itself again.

Through Bergson's example the idea of nothing is articulated as movement. In Chapter 2, I associate it with ideological movement. Further to this and as a result of this research, it is necessary to conclude that the idea of nothing is a dualism. That is, it cannot be defined or made manifest in art work in relation to something else as a binary relationship. To attempt to find one singular answer to the nothing paradox is a false problem because it exists outside of this questioning. Something is not the opposite of nothing.

The notion of abstract painting is also a dualism. It cannot be defined in terms of an opposite. This project demonstrates the idea of abstract art is also a dualism, and to define it in terms of a binary (art which contains something, such as mimesis) is also a false problem. One should not search for an answer to this

paradox as it is not a case of the identification of the 'more or less' (Deleuze 1966, pp. 17-18). Why seek answers to a problem where there are none? Bergson's principles of movement, duration, intuition and becoming elucidate the idea of nothing as a dualism and this is inevitably consistent with the paradox of abstract art. It is the presence of paradox that makes it inexhaustible.

Reduction is not absence. Malevich's example of nothing as a zero point is a beginning, not an ending. It is the beginning of painting as a type of philosophical enquiry; a desire to move beyond the mimicry of natural phenomena. It is 'not easy to decide when nothing made its way into art. It almost seems as if it has always been there. In essence, it is the very objective of art, for there is scarcely anything more essential to the long history of the visual arts than the desire to make the invisible visible' (Weinhart and Hollein 2006, p. 12).

Reduction through the agency of elimination actually communicates the opposite of emptiness. The removal of representational phenomena liberates the imagination and the vacant space becomes a receptacle for infinite possibility, albeit projected. This mechanism initiates an important shift in the interpretation and experience of art: a shift away from the artist as primary generator of meaning, to the viewer instead.

It seems obvious, strategically, to remove every 'extraneous' detail in order to reveal a source or core; to take apart and peek inside. This shift in the artist/audience exchange marks the beginnings of difficulty, due to the additional

demands upon the viewer as participant. Malevich's imposition was in fact the nothing paradox expressed as a picture (or anti-picture).⁴⁵

Consistent throughout the practical research is the presence of performance, as gesture in marks on a surface. This is conveyed through a sensation of touch and shown to be evident in varying degrees in mediated and unmediated works. Performance is the quality which adds a lived experience of time as duration. It is transferred, as frozen gesture, onto the surface of the work. It is the further evidencing of a life force or *élan vital*.

Through this research the implications of human-to-human collaboration are reconsidered and made possible in a different context. The photocopier was always a convenient surrogate for another person. The ultimate flaw in this concept was that instead of relinquishing control, it was in fact control by stealth. Despite days and days of repetitive toil, page after page of photocopying, I ultimately selected imagery which conformed to a pre-determined learned aesthetic convention. This is not collaboration but is intuitive method.

To collaborate with another person will extend the intuition method further and intensify unpredictability. I have cited *Can Your Monkey Do the Dog?* (2007), a digital collaboration between Josh Smith and Christopher Wool, as emphasising a new and different circumstance brought about by digital imaging technology.

⁴⁵ Any consideration of nothing is inherently associated with the assigning or manufacture of meaning.

This premise is plausible; however I propose a far simpler person to person collaboration one without a pre-determined premise at all. It needs no justification and, when complete will form a necessary becoming as intuitive life experience.

In the framework of this project, person-to-person collaboration also offers an intensification of movement. One can lose themselves in another and disappear completely. This leads into another future direction: to make a transparent clear resin copy of a painting. In *Peek-a-boo* (2015), the image appears and disappears, depending upon the viewer's position in the gallery space. It reflects upon shadows as a rendering of the idea of nothing (see Figure 78 and the associated discussion). A transparent resin copy of a painting would create a different type of shadow and extend the perimeters of this investigation. Resin casting techniques also extend the extremity of mediation to replication. There is pre-determination as the product is predictable; however, I anticipate unexpected ideological and contextual implications.

Reflecting upon Sisyphean looping and Bergson's intuition, I am drawn to the inevitable conclusion that, in order to continue, a degree of failure is unavoidable. Conceptual and stylistic characteristics pioneered during this research must be undermined and subverted to avoid habit and repetition. Things must be either undone, or factors external to the logic of the method must be sourced to enable the continued expansion of abstract painting.

The ontological framing of Expanded Abstract Painting within Bergson's notions of movement, duration, intuition and becoming evidences a contemporary reinterpretation. Importantly, it is expanded, open and moving. It offers indeterminate and intuitive interactions with imaging technology and stresses the importance of formal play. It also demonstrates that meaning can evolve alongside process as a state of becoming.

In the submission, there are unlikely correlations between very different mediums; namely, real-time painting and inkjet prints. These are juxtaposed but never combined as one work. This emphasises difference but requires an intuitive looking to perceive similarities.

Through an acknowledgement of the philosophical conversations surrounding abstract painting and process-based painting in general, a particular type of ontology is created. It demonstrates that human and machine are not binaries but a dualism of moving, living parts. Through contrasting gestural manifestations, a life can be projected through shifts in consciousness, into inanimate devices as feeling and as duration.

Appendix One: Bibliography

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Appendix Two: Summary of the Practical Research

List of Works

Series 1 - *The Same As It Never Was* 2016/17 (selected works)

- 1 *All and Nothing*, 2015 and *Pouring*, 2015, Exhibition View Moonah Arts Centre
- 2 *Developer malfunction photocopied 81 times enlarged at 200% projected at intervals of 0.2 of a second*, 2017, Microsoft Power point Presentation, dimensions variable and *Down to Earth*, 2015, inkjet print on matte paper, 128 cm x 91 cm
- 3 *Composite Matter*, 2015, mixed media on marine plywood 85 cm x 120 cm
- 4 *There*, 2015, mixed media on marine plywood, 34 x 47cm
- 5 *Altered States*, 2015, inkjet print on canvas, 170 cm x 190 cm
- 6 *How to disappear completely*, 2015, mixed media on marine plywood, 90 cm x 63.5 cm
- 7 *Shadow of Doubt*, 2015, clear silicon on mylar, 120 cm x 370 cm x 3
- 8 *All and Nothing*, (Panel 7), 2011 – 2015, vinyl ink on marine plywood, 47 cm x 65.5 cm
- 9 *Shadow of Doubt*, 2015, clear silicon on mylar, 120 cm x 400 cm, x 3

Preliminary paintings – 2016/17 (selected works)

- 10 *Untitled (No Idea) No.1*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm
- 11 *Untitled*, 2016, mixed media on 300gsm university cartridge, 122 cm x 86 cm
- 12 *Untitled*, 2016, mixed media on 300gsm university cartridge, 122 cm x 86 cm x 2
- 13 *Untitled Palette*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm
- 14 *Untitled (No Idea) No.2*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm
- 15 Detail above

Series 2 - *Untitled (No Idea)* 2016/17 (selected works)

- 16 *Untitled (No Idea) No.3*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm
- 17 *Untitled (No Idea) No.4*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm
- 18 *Untitled (No Idea) No.5*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm
- 19 *Untitled (No Idea) No.6*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm
- 20 *Untitled (No Idea) No.7*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm
- 21 *Untitled (No Idea) No.8*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm
- 22 *Untitled (No Idea) No.2*, 2016, mixed media on 300gsm university cartridge, 122 cm x 86 cm
- 23 *Untitled (No Idea) No. 3*, 2016, mixed media on 300gsm university cartridge, 122 cm x 86 cm
- 24 *Untitled (No Idea) No. 1*, 2016, mixed media on 300gsm university cartridge, 122 cm x 86 cm

Additional – *Floor paintings* 2017 (selected works)

- 25 *Untitled*, 2017, mixed media on mylar, 270 cm x 220 cm
- 26 *Grey Floor Painting*, 2017, mixed media on mylar, 260 cm x 240 cm
- 27 *Untitled*, 2016, mixed media on 300gsm university cartridge, 150 cm x 200 cm
- 28 *Untitled*, 2016, mixed media on 300gsm university cartridge, 122 cm x 172 cm

Series 3 - *Composite works* 2017/18 (selected works)

- 29 *Composite Work No.1*, 2017, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm, 109 cm x 120.5 cm and 80 cm x 72.5 cm
- 30 *Composite Work No.2*, 2017, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm, 109 cm x 120.5 cm and 80 cm x 72.5 cm
- 31 *Composite Work No.4*, 2017, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm, 109 cm x 120.5 cm and 80 cm x 72.5 cm

- 32 *Composite Work No.5*, 2017, mixed media on canvas, 145 cm x 160 cm, 109 cm x 120.5 cm and 80 cm x 72.5 cm

Composite works canvas panels - 2017/18 (selected works)

- 33 *Composite work*, 2017, mixed media on canvas panel, 30.5 cm x 40.6 cm
34 *Composite work*, 2017, mixed media on canvas panel, 30.5 cm x 40.6 cm
35 *Composite work*, 2017, mixed media on canvas panel, 30.5 cm x 40.6 cm
36 *Composite work*, 2017, mixed media on canvas panel, 30.5 cm x 40.6 cm
37 *Composite work*, 2017, mixed media on canvas panel, 30.5 cm x 40.6 cm
38 *Composite work*, 2017, mixed media on canvas panel, 30.5 cm x 40.6 cm
39 *Composite work*, 2017, mixed media on canvas panel, 30.5 cm x 40.6 cm
40 *Composite work*, 2017, mixed media on canvas panel, 30.5 cm x 40.6 cm

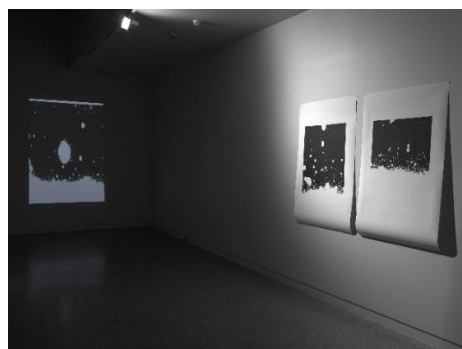
Series 4 - Found Object Scans 2016/17 (selected works)

- 41 *Found Object Scan*, 2017, inkjet print on paper, 125 cm x 91.5 cm
42 *Found Object Scan*, 2017, inkjet print on paper, 125 cm x 91.5 cm
43 *Found Object Scan*, 2017, inkjet print on paper, 125 cm x 91.5 cm
44 *Found Object Scan*, 2017, inkjet print on paper, 125 cm x 91.5 cm
45 *Found Object Scan*, 2017, inkjet print on paper, 125 cm x 91.5 cm
46 *Found Object Scan*, 2017, inkjet print on paper, 125 cm x 91.5 cm

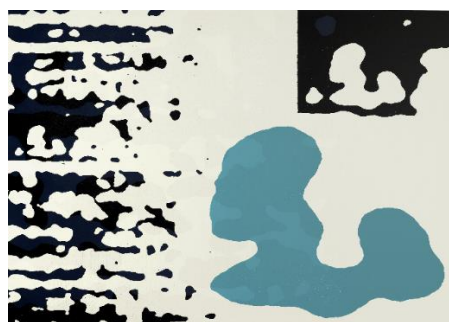
Series 1 - *The Same as it Never Was* 2016/17 (selected works)



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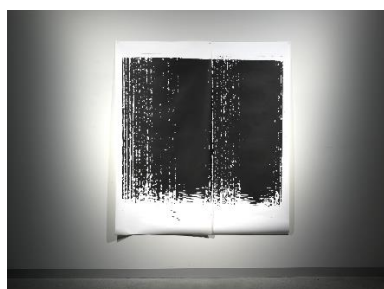
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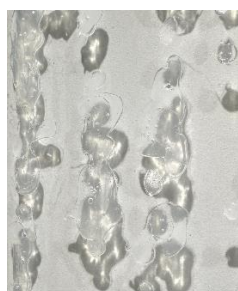
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Preliminary paintings – 2016/17 (selected works)



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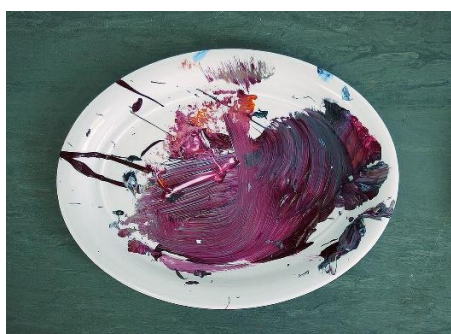
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Series 2 - *Untitled (No Idea)* 2016/17 (selected works)



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Floor paintings 2017 (selected works)



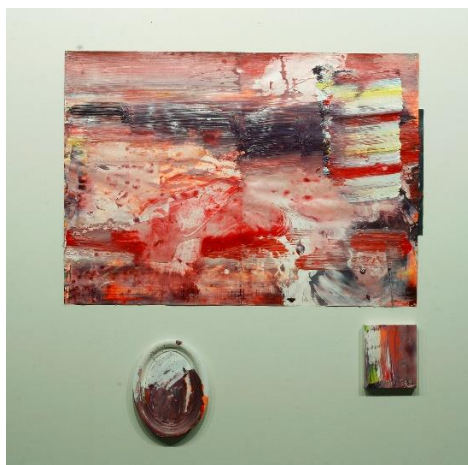
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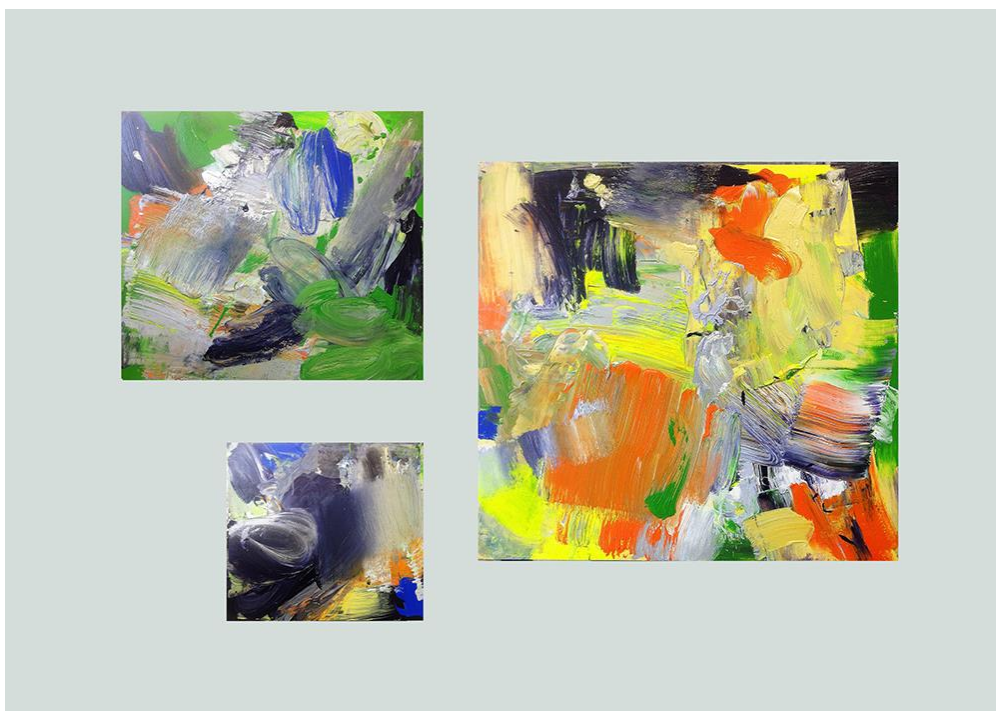


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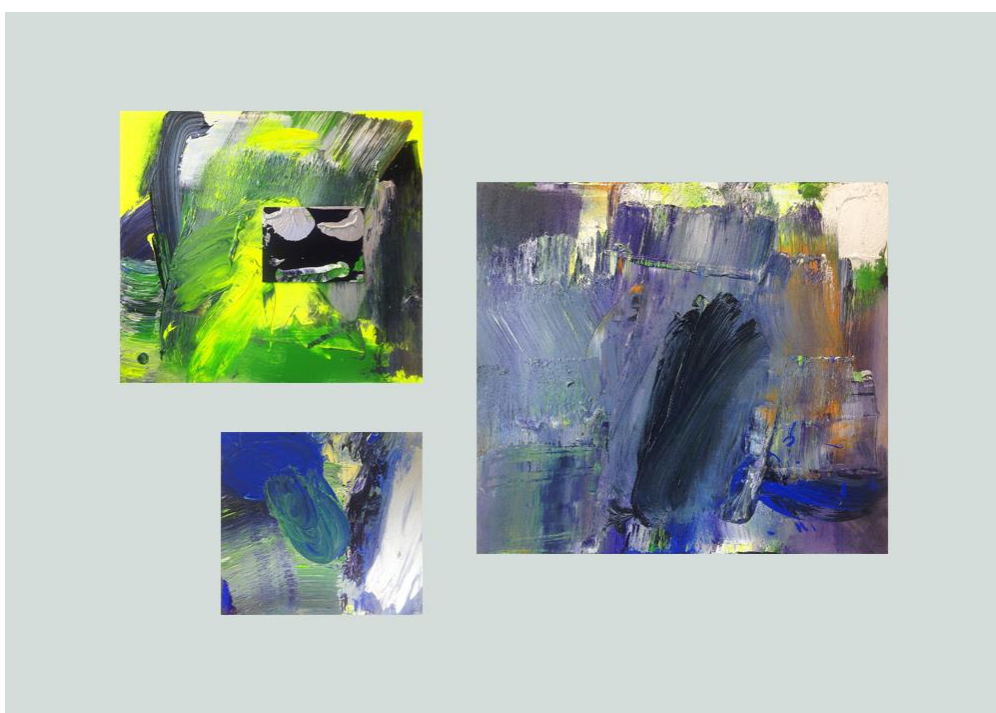


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Series 3 - Composite works 2017/18 (selected works)



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Series 3 - Composite works 2017/18 (selected works) continued

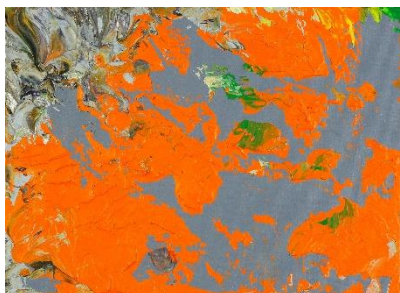


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Composite works canvas panels - 2017/18 (selected works)



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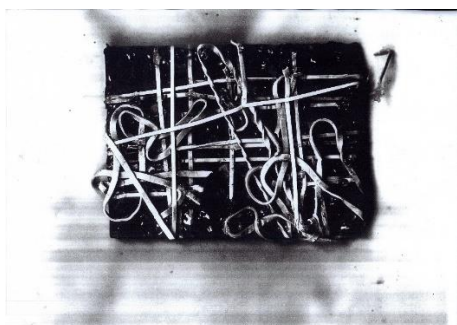


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Series 4 - *Found Object Scans 2016/17* (selected works)



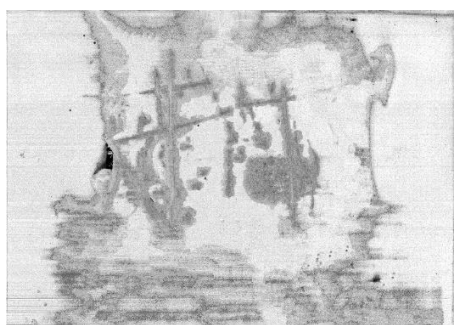
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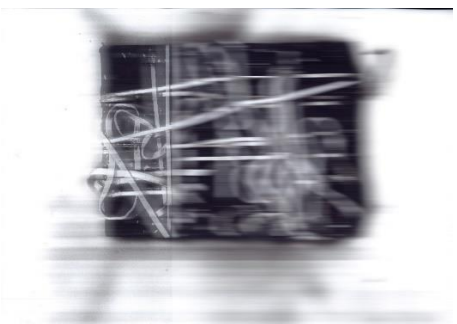
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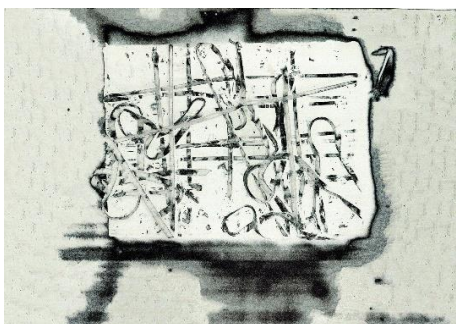
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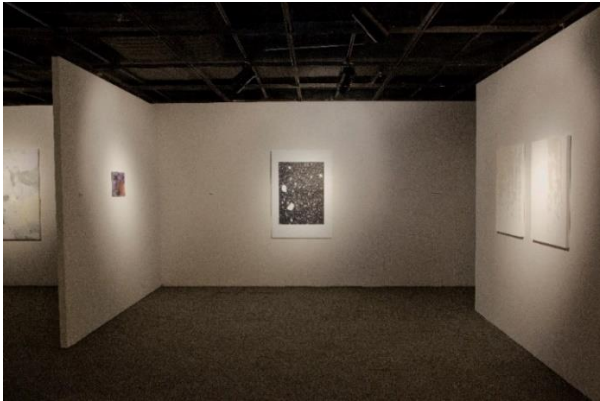


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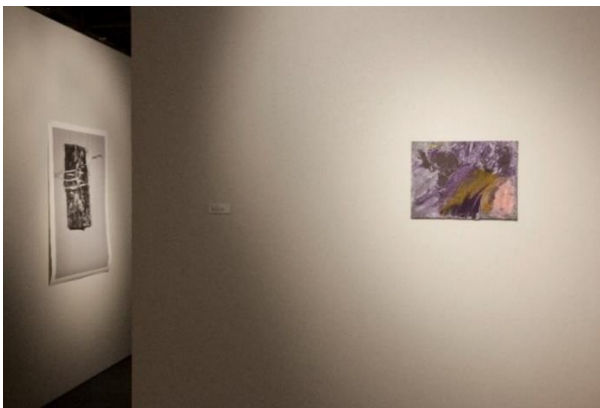


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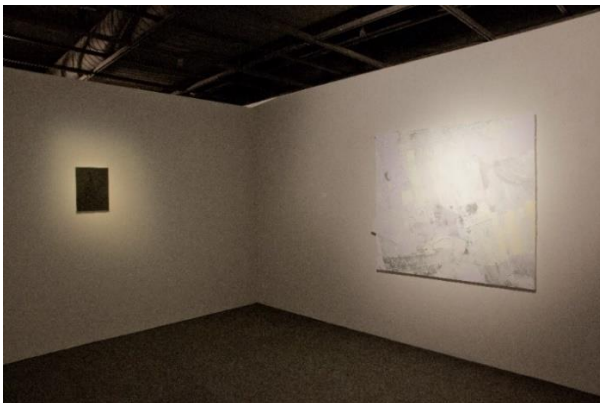
Appendix Three: The Submission



01. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



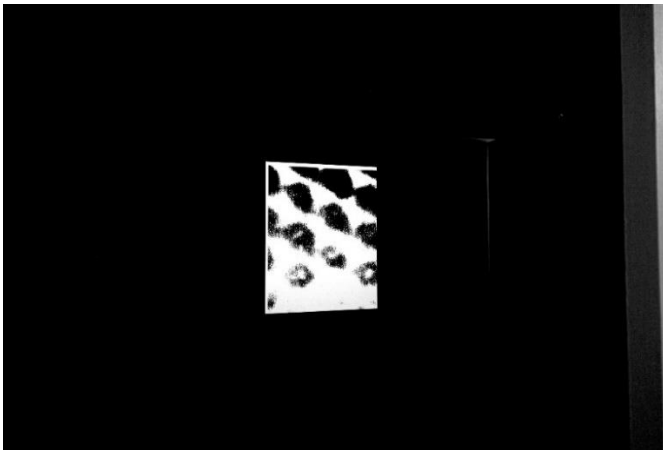
02. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



03. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



04. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



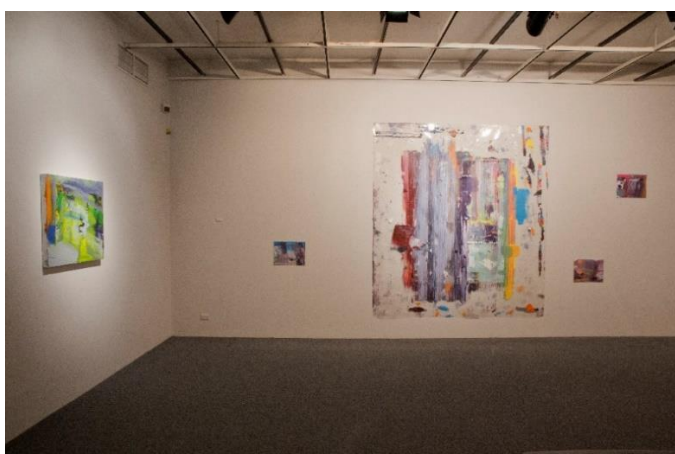
05. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart (Animation)



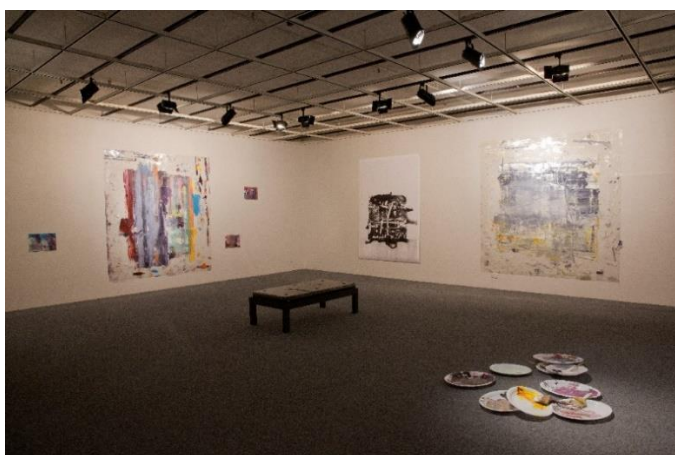
06. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



07. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



08. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart (Tall Gallery)



09. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



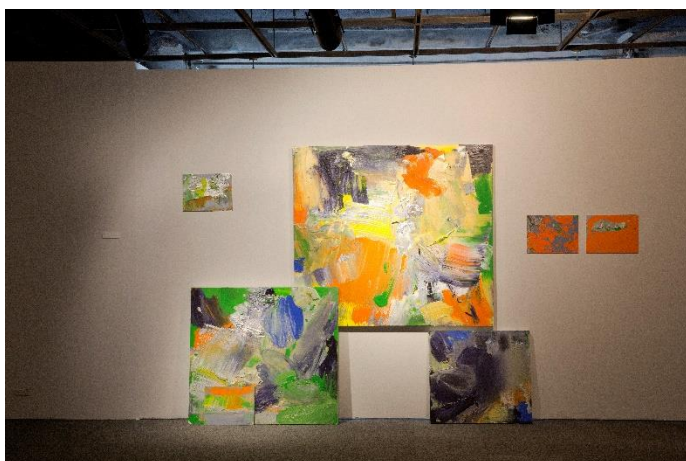
10. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart (Tall Gallery)



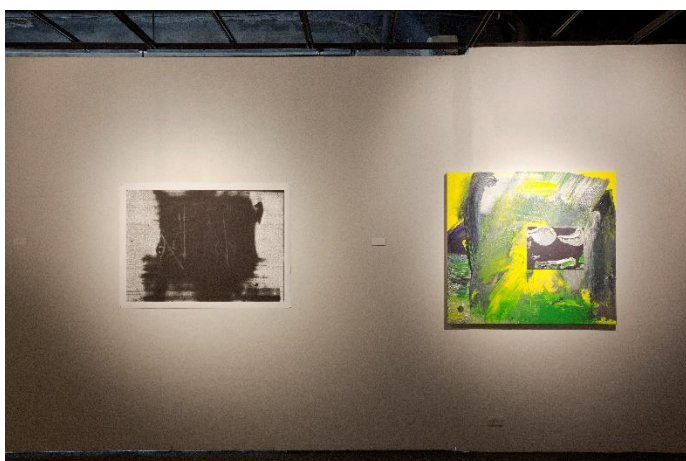
11. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



12. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



13. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



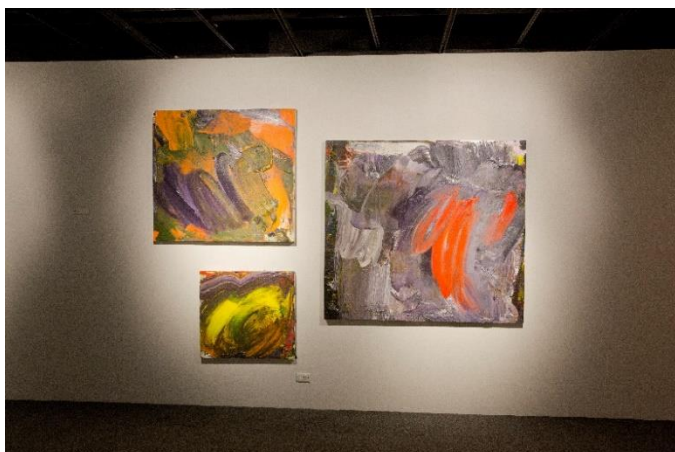
14. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



15. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



16. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



17. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



18. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



19. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart



20. PhD Submission Installation Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart
Photographic Documentation by Simon Cuthbert.